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AUTHOR Clennell, Stephanie, Ed.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

British students 60 years and older in 1985-86 were studied in order to learn about their age, sex, marital status, employment background, the subjects they study, their reasons for studying, how they study, and what they think about their studies. Considered by the researchers to be the largest survey of older students, the study involved 2,254 students in Britain's Open University and 1,418 students taking courses at other adult education institutions. Analysis of questionnaires returned by the subjects revealed the following points: (1) more males than females were in courses that led to qualifications, and more females than males took courses that do not lead to qualifications; (2) there were no other significant differences between the backgrounds of older students undertaking Open University study and those undertaking other forms of study; (3) many students move between institutions from year to year; (4) most of the subjects had enjoyed school and had undertaken further study throughout their lives; (5) older students at all the institutions were from a wide range of occupational groups, although there was a predominance of white-collar workers; and (6) the subjects' rather traditional learning styles might be a reflection not of their preference but of what is offered to them. The appendixes provide: (1) detailed research findings in charts and text; and (2) the two survey questionnaires. (25 tables and 7 figures) (CML)

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The Older Students Research Group

Val Morrison, a key member of the Older Students Research Group, tragically died in a climbing accident in 1986. Since 1985, in addition to Val, the Group has consisted of Barbara Bilston, Stephanie Clennell, Walter Butterworth, Nigel Cutress, Patrick Kelly, Clive Lawless, Fiona Palmer, Pat Proctor, Peter Varney, Christine Wareham and George Watts. One group (Cutress, Palmer, Kelly) has taken particular responsibility for the Open University and another (Clennell, Bilston, Varney, Watts) for the adult education aspects of the Group's work. The final report has been a joint responsibility.

We should also like to thank all the institutions and individuals who have given generously of their time in talking to us and giving access to their records and the many students who gave time to completing the questionnaire; Regional Academic Services and the Institute of Educational Technology of the Open University for encouragement and for practical and financial support; Alan Woodley, who acted as our assessor, for his help and advice; the Open University Research Committee and the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) for financial support with this phase of the research; and the European Cultural Foundation for making it possible for us to start on the next phase.

Contents

Page

List of tables
List of figures
An Introductory Summary 1

Chapter 1 Introduction 2
Chapter 2 Methodology 5
Chapter 3 Students background 11
Chapter 4 Subjects of study 18
Chapter 5 Reasons for study 24
Chapter 6 Study Methods and the Experience of study 31
Chapter 7 The Approaches to Study Inventory 41
Chapter 8 Conclusion 46

Appendix 1 List of institutions studied 51
Appendix 2 Institutions studied - background information 52
Appendix 3 Course provision by institution 57
Appendix 4 Age, sex, marital status by institution 59
Appendix 5 Students highest educational qualification by institution 60
Appendix 6 Main occupation by institution 61
Appendix 7 Subjects studied by institution 62
Appendix 8 Patterns of study of older students 63
Appendix 9 Approaches to Study Inventory 69
Appendix 10 Acknowledgements 71
Appendix 11 Questionnaires 72

List of Tables

Page

1. Questionnaire distribution and response 9
2. Age, sex and marital status of older students 13
3. Main occupation of older students 14
4. Highest educational qualification of older students 15
5. Further education and training after leaving school 16
6. Open University students' choice of faculty 21
7. Study intentions 21
8. Open University students' study intentions 23
9. Ability to undertake concentrated study 35
10. Coping with the pace of study 36
11. Action taken by students who fall behind 38
12. Approaches to Study Inventory sub-scale means 43
13. Adult student enrolment in LEA areas 56
14. Age, sex, marital status of students by institution 59
15. Highest educational level by institution 60
16. Main occupation by institution 61
17. Subjects studied by institution 62
18. Older students' orientation to study 63
19. Weekly study patterns 64
20. Time spent in tutorials 66
21. Time spent reading course material 66
22. Time spent preparing assessed work 67
23. Time spent in private reading/extra study 67
24. Student preparation for examinations 68
25. Four factor solution showing loadings of ASI sub-scales 69

Note: 1. All percentages are rounded in the tables and in the text
2. * = less than 0.5%

List of Figures

Page

1. Students' choice of subject - distance education 18
2. Students' choice of subject - liberal adult education 19
3. Students' choice of subject - LEA institutions 19
4. Reasons for study - distance education 27
5. Reasons for study - liberal adult education 28
6. Reasons for study - LEA institutions 29
7. Reasons for study - Open University 30

OLDER STUDENTS IN ADULT EDUCATION

An Introductory Summary

1. This is a report on the findings of the Older Students Research Group's survey of older students: that is, people who were aged 60 and over, who were undertaking adult education in 1985-1986.

2. The findings were based on questionnaires returned by 2,254 older students taking Open University courses and 1,418 older students taking courses in other adult education institutions: it is thought that this is the largest such survey yet undertaken.

3. In addition to the Open University, the institutions involved in the study were London University (external students and Extra-Mural Department); the Workers' Educational Association (Berks, Bucks & Oxon and Southern Districts); local education authority centres in Dorset, Essex, Lancashire and Leicestershire; the National Extension College; Wolsey Hall; and certain Universities of the Third Age.

4. The report includes data on the age, sex and marital status of older students; their employment background; the subjects they study; the reasons why they study; how they go about studying; and what they make of the experience of studying.

5. There were more male students following courses leading to qualifications; more females on courses which do not lead to qualifications.

6. With this exception there are no significant differences between the background of older students undertaking Open University study and those undertaking other forms of study; in fact many older students move between different institutions from year to year.

7. Most of the people following adult education courses in later life had enjoyed school and had undertaken further study throughout their life.

8. Older students in all institutions are drawn from a wide range of occupational groups, though with a predominance of white collar workers.

9. The overall picture which emerged was of large numbers of older people undertaking educational activities enthusiastically and competently. Their rather traditional learning styles may well reflect what they are offered by courses and tutors.

10. This is the second report of the group, and some of its findings are of an interim nature. A third report, incorporating data from a number of European institutions, is in preparation.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

This report seeks to make a contribution to the growing body of material on the educational experience of older students - students aged 60 and over - in adult education. It extends earlier work on older students in the Open University to encompass older students in a wide range of adult education and correspondence tuition institutions in Britain. We have sought to find comparisons between the experiences of students undertaking various forms of adult learning, and to examine the ways in which older people involve themselves in education.

This is the second report of the Open University's Older Students Research Group. Our first report Older Students in the Open University (1984) described the findings of our research on the characteristics and academic performance of 2826 students aged 60 and over in the University in 1982 (for which we drew on the University's data base); on the motives and educational experience of a more limited sample of those students (using questionnaire responses from 861 older students in four of the University's regions); and we illustrated our findings with selections from the open-ended comments made by older students on the questionnaires and in interviews. For this second report we have extended our enquiries to the 3206 older students in all thirteen of the University's regions in 1985, using a new questionnaire to examine study methods and approaches to study. The questionnaires and other sources of data are described in Chapter 2: Methodology below.

Our first report showed that older students in the Open University were committed and hard working; they worried about their studies beforehand, but most of their worries proved unjustified; they enjoyed their studies and felt a sense of achievement; and their academic performance was good. These findings were a challenge to some of the stereotypes of ageing which associate ageing with a general notion of physical and intellectual decline. They raised for us - and for other readers of the report - the question of whether older students in the Open University working towards a degree were, in terms of attitudes and commitment, atypical of adult students as a whole. We were led therefore to ask similar questions of older students in other educational settings, and so to this second report.

So in addition to reinforcing our 1984 work on Open University students we have extended our research to look at older students in a number of other institutions, using the same study methods questionnaire as for Open University students, and also collecting basic data about students aged 60 and over where this was available. In 1985-7 we set out to assemble material on a similar scale to that available for some 3000 Open University students, so that we could look for comparisons and for common features. We therefore approached a variety of institutions - universities, local authority centres, correspondence colleges and others - and with their help and willing co-operation (and with care over confidentiality) we were able to look through their records and distribute questionnaires to their older students. In the event we collected basic data on

8

some thousands of students (see Appendices), and received questionnaire responses from 1418 of the over-60 students in those institutions.

We began these enquiries in 1985. In 1986 the Unit for the Development of Adult and Continuing Education (UDACE) which had set up an Education and Older Students Developmental Group, suggested that we might extend our enquiry. The working party had already commissioned a six-month study (by Alexandra Withnall) into the background to the subject. This drew in part on informal interviews in Essex, Lancashire and the City of Leicester. The working party asked our group to extend the Withnall enquiry by applying the procedures we were already using to those same three areas. We did this during 1986, and our findings for the three areas are incorporated with our other data below.

In a third stage of its work, the group is extending its enquiries using the same methodology to gather data from adult education institutions in several European countries. Some of this material is already being analysed at the time of writing and will form the basis of a third report of the group.

We initially chose institutions with the intention of examining at least one example of each of the main types of provision. In the event, these institutions seemed to us to fall naturally into four categories. There was the Open University itself; there were those other institutions providing correspondence and distance-based education; there were those providing what we have called, for the purpose of this report, "liberal adult education"; and there were the Local Education Authority (LEA) centres and colleges. We have used the term "liberal adult education" to describe those institutions, of which the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is an example, which are mainly self-directing, and which have leant towards the discussion of, and instruction in, cultural rather than practical subjects. We maintained the distinction between the Open University and the other correspondence-based institutions because it has far more students, most of them pursuing degree level courses; and of course because one of our original aims was to assess the possibly distinctive character of its students.

Our methodology is described in Chapter 2, and will be only briefly outlined here. For the Open University, with its sophisticated student data base, and students in the habit of receiving and returning questionnaires through the post, our problems were in handling the bulk of the material rather than collecting it. For other adult students (and even with sympathetic help from the various institutions) our problems were more formidable. None of the institutions kept more than limited information on older students. Many of them kept no record of students' ages; sometimes because the information was not needed, and sometimes because such information was considered potentially discriminatory. The resulting difficulties are discussed in more detail below. In the event we were not surprised that our returns of questionnaires distributed to other adult students were much lower than for Open University students, and that the consequent sample was not fully representative. However, in spite of these limitations to our work, and its selective character, we have been able to collect more data on older students in adult education than (we believe) anyone has done in the past, and can present findings based on significant numbers of both Open University and other adult students.

In looking at local authority adult education provision - in Essex, Lancashire, Leicester and Dorset - we used as background material basic census data on population and age structure. We then wherever possible drew on LEA records to give 1985 county or city figures for registrations at adult education classes, and in particular registrations of pensioners and other groups identifiable as over 60. We analysed, for LEA centres as for other institutions, the class programmes for 1985-86, categorising their contents into ten groups. Finally, we noted some evidence of policy and practice in educational provision for older people, where it was evident in regulations and briefing documents, or from conversations with LEA officers, centre heads and others (see Appendix 2).

In reporting on institutions without a specific geographical character such as the National Extension College (NEC), no census data has been used. We were able to draw some conclusions about the general character of each institution and its course provision; we noted where possible total student numbers, and the number of students we were able to identify as over 60; and we summarised the questionnaire responses. For these institutions too, we analysed course provision into our ten categories.

As with our first report, in addition to demographic data and questionnaire material we acquired in the course of our enquiries a great deal of more subjective material, including the mass of open-ended comments which we had invited at the end of the questionnaire. We have used this material as complementary to the more objective material, to illustrate and flesh out the numbers. It has also helped to reinforce some of the points we make in our conclusion.

CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

The methodology we adopted was influenced by our earlier work on older Open University students. The results of our first survey suggested two questions: one, how far are older Open University students typical or atypical of older students generally; and two, what can be found about the approach to learning of older students as a whole. We wanted therefore to get an overall view of older students in a range of adult education organisations.

We already had available the Open University student data base, which covered the 3206 undergraduate students who were aged 60 or over in 1985. Our need was to survey the Open University population of older students in 1985, and to explore the possibility of obtaining comparable information about the older students in a range of institutions and settings, which might be representative of the principal types of adult education being offered in the United Kingdom, and with a wide geographical spread.

We did not include in the survey those who were registered as Associate Students with the Open University in 1985.

2.1 Selection of the Sample

It was clear that getting a truly representative sample of older students needed a survey on a scale of such magnitude that it was beyond our resources. We had to be selective. We knew (from Alan Woodley's 1984 survey[1] and recent 1987 'Choosing to Learn'[2]) that the number of older people doing degree courses in universities or polytechnics, apart from the Open University, was very small. We decided not to approach them, as we had data on more than 90% of older university students from our Open University survey. An in-depth study of one small area was a possibility which we rejected, because the range in demographic features and adult education provision could not be wide enough for our purposes. Instead we decided to include at least one example of the main types of provision: statutory provision; responsible bodies; commercial and voluntary organisations and to take these from different areas of the country. The final selection was made on the basis of contacts with representatives of these different organisations.

The organisations included in the survey were:

1. London University (External Students), National Extension College, Wolsey Hall. Students in these organisations have in common the fact that they study at a distance; in the case of NEC and Wolsey Hall their study is mainly by means of correspondence courses; London University External Students may use correspondence courses or private study.

2. London University Extra-Mural Department, Workers' Educational Association (Berks, Bucks and Oxon and Southern districts). These represent the "responsible bodies", which traditionally offer liberal adult education courses, which do not lead to any formal qualifications. We also included

eighteen of the recently developed Universities of the Third Age (U3A), whose main approach and methods have more in common with those of the responsible bodies than those of other sectors of adult education.

We shall use the term liberal adult education to describe this group, without any suggestion that there is no liberal element in other types of provision.

3. LEA provision is represented by selected institutions in Dorset, Essex, Lancashire and Leicester. Initially Christchurch Adult Education Centre, Dorset agreed to take part in the survey. We were then approached by the Education and Older Adults Development Group of UDACE with a request to include more examples of LEA provision. With UDACE support and funding we were able to include a number of LEA institutions in Essex, Lancashire and Leicester.

2.2 Composition of the Questionnaries

Two self-completion questionnaires were used in the survey (see Appendix 11).

One questionnaire was issued to students aged 60 and over in the selected institutions, and another shorter questionnaire was sent to all Open University undergraduate students aged 60 and over in 1985.

The questionnaire for the older students in the selected institutions has three sections:

Section 1 has questions on age, sex, marital status, educational and occupational background, attitudes to schooling, experience of further education, motives for studying, and current subject of study.

Section 2 has factual questions about study methods, time spent, organisation of work, and use of study aids.

Section 3 uses the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI) on attitudes to study; this is an instrument already well tested on conventional university students, Open University students of different ages, and on mature students in Australia.

The questionnaire which was issued to all Open University students aged over 60 has only two sections, which correspond to Section 2 and Section 3 above. The questions in Section 1 of the questionnaire described above had been put to older Open University students in 1982-3, and the findings were included in our 1984 report. As the student data base for 1985 showed no change in students' overall characteristics, demographic data was taken from the 1985 student data base.

Questions 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12 in Section 1 of the questionnaire issued to students in the selected institutions were identical to questions included in our first questionnaire to older Open University students. For Open University responses to these questions we used the data from the survey on which we reported in 1984.

2.3 Collection of Data

All current Open University undergraduate students over the age of 60 in 1985 (3206) were selected from the OU data base; the questionnaire was mailed to them with a covering letter and a reply-paid label for its return.

It was not so simple to reach older students in other organisations. We realised that we should have to rely heavily on the co-operation of those concerned. This led us to those institutions with which we already had connections and where we thought we could expect assistance. We are grateful for their co-operation and for the help which was so generously given. We had first to ask the institutions which had agreed to take part in the survey whether they could identify older students from their records; if they could, we were given access to the records and got names and addresses of students who were over 60 by going through all the records. The questionnaire was then mailed to these students, with a covering letter of support from each institution.

The other institutions (London University Extra-Mural Department, Workers' Educational Association, LEA colleges), do not record age, though in some cases there were notes of students who claimed concessionary fees as state pensioners. We were told, however, that it is known that many pensioners do not opt to pay the concessionary rate; and since men do not qualify for the state pension until age 65, we could not identify men between 60 and 65 this way. We assumed that students in the Universities of the Third Age were by definition older; there were some replies from people not yet 60, and responses from them were not used in the survey.

For Extra-Mural and WEA students we first sent batches of short forms to tutors and asked them to distribute these to their students in class, collect them and return them to us. The form asked students to volunteer to receive a questionnaire, give their name and address, and indicate their age in three broad age groups. From the forms returned we selected the 60 plus group and mailed the questionnaire to them.

In LEA institutions our method was to have discussions with organisers and teaching staff and to arrange with them to visit a large number of classes and ask students to take a questionnaire away, complete it, and return it by post later. The visits were made by members of the research group or by staff of the institutions. The response from this method was poorer than from direct mailing.

The survey of LEA institutions in Essex, Lancashire and Leicester was financed by UDACE, but the date by which approvals were given prevented this from being done until May 1986, towards the end of the academic year. Students' addresses were available in some of the institutions in Leicester and questionnaires were posted to these students. In other cases questionnaires were distributed to students in classes.

2.4 Response to the Questionnaire

There was a good response from the Open University undergraduate students; 76% of the questionnaires were completed and returned.

We had not expected a good response from the older students in other institutions. As we have said, it was difficult first to identify the older students, and then we had to use a variety of methods of distribution in different kinds of institution. We have exact figures for the response in those cases where we were able to compile a mailing list; but where questionnaires were distributed to classes, or where supplies of questionnaires were given to administrators, or teachers who agreed to help by distributing them, we have in some cases only estimates of how many they gave out. It was not possible to send reminders.

In distance education 32% of students replied; over 50% of extra-mural and WEA students replied; six U3As gave us a mailing list, but others, including the large London U3A, were sent questionnaires which they addressed and distributed themselves, and we do not have exact figures for the number issued. We estimate that at least 40% of students in liberal adult education bodies replied. There was probably an overall response of about 20% of students in LEA institutions, estimated from rather deficient information about the number of questionnaires issued. The response from the students in all the institutions which took part seems to represent between 35% and 40% of those who received questionnaires.

Clearly the methods of distribution which we had to use will have led to some bias in the response; it may be fair to assume that replies came in the main from well organised students who are regular attenders. From one point of view the response was very good: we asked for comments at the end of the questionnaire, and the majority of those who completed it added comments and gave further information about themselves. We find here case histories and students' views on their current study in their chosen institutions.

Table 1 Questionnaire Distribution and Response

	No. Issued	No. of useable questionnaries returned
1. Distance Education		
London University (external)	256	62
National Extension College	198	74
Wolsey Hall	122	47
Total in group	-	183
2. Liberal Adult Education	-	-
London University Extra-Mural Dept	125	88
Workers Educational Association	253	114
Universities of the Third Age	estimated 1465	451
Total in group	-	653
3. LEA Institutions		
Christchurch, Dorset	194	94
North Essex	Not known	103
South East Essex	Not known	54
Lancashire	Not known	84
Leicester	968	247
Total in group		582
Total in all groups		1418
Open University undergraduate students	3206	2254

2.5 Analysis of the Questionnaire

First an analysis was made of responses from each separate institution to the pre-coded questions. Responses to open-ended questions were then coded. The subjects studied by the respondents were organised into ten categories, so that the provision in different institutions could be compared.

We give details of some of the main findings for each separate institution in Appendices 3-7.

In the following chapters we present the data in three groups of institutions or organisations. The questionnaire was designed for students following either academic or non-academic courses and at different levels; and level of study could be estimated only in the case of courses leading to a qualification. The students are characterised, therefore, by the kind of institution in which they were studying. We found that the analysis did in fact show that in the responses from students there were many similarities corresponding to the kind of institution where they were studying. When we were deciding on our sample, we had distinguished three broad groupings in adult education: distance education; liberal adult education; and LEA provision. Our analysis of the responses confirmed our view that they did on the whole fall into these three groups.

One of our main aims was to look at older students' approach to learning; and there are broad similarities within each group of institutions in their organisation, in their provision, and in the teaching and learning methods most commonly used. Clearly each institution makes its own distinctive contribution to adult education and each has also some features in common with institutions of a different kind. Nevertheless the grouped results show patterns in the background of the students, what they study, and their approach to study.

We give, for the purposes of comparison, some data from our first study of older Open University students in 1984[3] and from the OU survey by questionnaire in 1985.

Summary

The institutions which took part in the survey were chosen to give examples of different kinds of provision in distance, liberal and LEA education for adults. The survey was by self-completion questionnaire. Data collection was difficult, because of the problem of identifying older students, since most institutions' records do not give ages. Just under 40% of those identified and approached responded, but the response from the LEA institutions was rather poor; 76% of Open University undergraduate students responded. Results were analysed by each institution or area and findings then presented in three main groups of institutions; findings from the separate Open University survey are also given.

References

1. Woodley, A., (1984) The older the better? A study of mature student performance in British universities. Research in Education No. 32, November, 35-50.

2. Woodley, A., Wagner, L., Slowey, M., Hamilton, M. and Fulton, O., (1987) Choosing to Learn: adults in education. The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

3. Older Students Research Group (1984) Older Students in the Open University. Regional Academic Services, Open University.

CHAPTER 3 - STUDENTS' BACKGROUND

3.1 Institutions

Within each of the three broad groups into which we put the institutions there were overall similarities in their type of provision, levels of study, and teaching methods.

1 Distance Education.

London University (External), National Extension College, Wolsey Hall. The courses are mainly for qualifications, though they range from introductory study skills, O and A levels, to degree and professional qualifications. Teaching is mainly by correspondence. Courses are open to all adults, though there may be pre-requisites for the higher level courses

2 Liberal Adult Education

London University Extra-Mural Department, Workers' Educational Association, Universities of the Third Age.

Courses are open to all adults. A large proportion of the courses are in the humanities and the social sciences. They are normally not for qualification, though London Extra-Mural Department offers some diploma courses. Study is mainly in groups with tutors or in lecture programmes. U3As have developed only in the early nineteen-eighties in Britain, and only they have programmes which are intended to be primarily for older students. Some U3As run study groups without official tutors.

3 LEA Organisations.

Colleges of Further Education and Adult Education Centres or Community Colleges in Dorset, Essex, Lancashire and Leicester.

Local colleges, which provide some full-time post-school education, also offer part-time courses for adults and so do local community colleges. The courses range from O and A Levels, professional and technical qualifications, to practical and leisure activities. Most courses require weekly attendance at a class, though some areas are beginning to develop flexi-study and open learning courses.

Comparisons will be made with students doing Open University courses. Open University courses are academic, leading to a degree; the respondents in the survey were undergraduates following a degree programme.

The three distance education organisations have much in common in their administration, methods, and programmes. The Open University belongs to this category, but we shall show its students' responses separately, because of the size of the sample and because it contains such a high proportion of the older students who are studying at undergraduate level.

The WEA traditionally responds to student initiative and student demand in what it offers; the recently developed U3As are similar in this respect; and the WEA works closely with extra-mural departments, though some of the latter's activities are more closely linked with university provision.

Despite some differences in the areas themselves we found that, in the LEA areas studied, the pattern of provision by the colleges of further education and community colleges was fairly similar; the former offer more courses for qualification and the latter more leisure activities, but there is considerable overlap here. Within LEA areas there is evidence of some differences in provision at local level. We studied a limited number of institutions in a few areas; and the results need to be seen in this context.

In any case for students there is a choice of methods and organisation: a student wanting a literature course, for example, can choose one in any of the organisations; a student wanting to do an O Level course (in some subjects at least) has the choice of distance learning or an LEA college. But students' choices may be fairly severely limited by what is available locally, or by financial constraints.

3.2 Students

Our knowledge of older students in adult education is based on 1418 responses to the questionnaire: 183 (13%) from distance education organisations; 653 (46%) from liberal adult education; and 582 (41%) from LEA institutions.

Information about Open University students comes from two sources: the University's student data base for all older students and the response to the questionnaire from three quarters (76%) of the older student population.

The age of the respondents from all the institutions ranges from 60 to 89; overall there are more women than men: 71% in liberal adult education, 68% in LEA courses. There is, however, a clear difference between these and the distance education organisations in that here men are in the majority: 61% are men; and in the Open University 55% are men. The same picture emerges in the 1987 study of mature students by Woodley et al[1]. There is a greater percentage of women in the older age groups in the population as a whole (1981 census data show that 59% of the whole over-60 age group are women and over 75 there are nearly twice as many women as men), so the higher percentage of men among those studying at a distance (in the Open University and the other organisations) is even more striking; these organisations also have a smaller percentage of students in the upper age groups. Do many men particularly in early retirement have a preference for structured courses with clear goals?

Table 2 Age, Sex and Marital Status of Older Students

	Distance education	Liberal adult ed.	LEA	OU undergraduate students	
Base = respondents	183	653	582	2254	
Age	%	%	%	%	%
60-64	43	31	34	52	
65-69	34	33	36	32	
70-74	16	23	21	13	
75-89	7	13	10	[illegible]	
Sex					
Male	61	29	32	55	
Female	39	71	68	45	
Marital Status					
Single	20	16	13	10	
Married	64	50	62	55	
Other	16	33	24	35	

3.2.1 Occupation

Respondents told us their main occupation, or what it had been on retirement. More than two thirds (68%) of those in the three distance education institutions are or were in administration, management, teaching or other professions, as against a third of the LEA students and about 55% of those in liberal adult education. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the LEA and liberal adult education students were in clerical and office jobs, and 13% of the LEA students were in sales and services.

We also asked what other main occupations they had had in the course of their working life. Among those mentioned was housewife (10% for liberal adult education and LEA students and 7% for students in distance education.) Service in the armed forces was mentioned by 15% of distance education students and by 10% in the other two groups; this no doubt again reflects the higher proportion of men in the distance education group. Clerical and office work was also quoted quite often as a previous occupation (13% distance and liberal adult education and 10% LEA students). The number of students in farming and manufacturing was low in the overall sample, though higher in the LEA students (5% as against under 2% in the others). Nevertheless every main category of occupation appeared somewhere in our sample.

We cannot make direct comparisons with Open University students' occupations on the basis of the questionnaire. Our information from the 1985 student data base gave the students' occupation on entry to the University, and so 34% appear as retired. Respondents to our earlier questionnaire were asked about their main occupation; 57% of them had been in administration, teaching or other professions, and 14% were in clerical and office work, 5% in sales and services.

Table 3 Main Occupation of Older Students

	Distance education	Liberal adult ed	LEA	OU occupation on entry
Base = respondents	183	653	582	2254
	%	%	%	%
Full-time housewives	5	8	10	)
Housewives with part-time work	2	2	1	14)
Armed forces	-	*	-	*
Administrators & managers	11	9	7	8
Teachers	25	21	15	10
Medical professions	8	6	5	7
Social welfare	3	4	2	*
Other professions & arts	19	12	5	3
Scientists & engineers	2	3	2	4
Technical personnel	1	1	2	4
Electrical, skilled trades	-	1	3	1
Farming, manufacturing	2	1	5	1
Communications, transport	2	1	2	1
Clerical & office	15	23	23	8
Sales & services	4	5	13	3
Unemployed/retired	3	3	4	Retired 34
No response	*		*	

* = less than 0.5%

3.2.2 Educational Background

We asked students to tell us their highest educational qualification. There were considerable differences in the background of students in different kinds of institution.

Table 4 Highest Educational Qualification of Older Students

	Distance education	Liberal adult ed	LEA	OU
Base = respondents	183	653	582	2254
	%	%	%	%
No formal qualifications	11	20	42	15
RSA/CSE	1	3	4	3
CSE Grade 1/GCE O Levels	6	13	14	23
GCE A Levels	13	13	6	12
ONC/OND	1	1	1	3
HNC/HND	4	3	2	6
Teaching Certificate	10	12	12	12
University diploma	7	6	5	8
University degree	31	21	8	11
Postgraduate degree	15	7	3	1
No reply/other	2	1	4	4

Note: Equivalents to current qualifications were assessed for most respondents.

The percentage of students with no formal qualifications is highest in the LEA institutions. It is lowest in the distance education bodies, though somewhat higher in the Open University. Six in ten of the LEA students do not have qualifications for entry to higher education, while 46% of those studying at a distance already have degrees, compared with 28% in liberal adult education, 11% in LEA institutions and 12% in the Open University.

3.2.3 School and After

There was little difference between respondents in different organisations as far as their view of their schooling was concerned. Most people (81%) said that they had enjoyed it very much or on the whole, and only 3% said that they had not enjoyed school at all. A slightly larger number of those studying at a distance (19% as against 12% and 15%) said that they had not enjoyed it very much.

We thought that one of the most striking findings of our work was the indication that most older students were continuing a lifelong involvement in education. The majority of respondents (74%) had had some kind of further education or training more than 5 years after leaving school, and 70% within 5 years of leaving school. Only 3% of all the respondents said that they had had no involvement in further education before their present course, and this was the case with only 2% of Open University students.

Table 5 Further Education and Training After Leaving School

	Distance education	Liberal adult ed.	LEA	OU
	%	%	%	%
None at all	-	2	6	2
Within 5 years	68	72	66	79
More than 5 years	80	74	70	73

Interruption of Education

We asked about interruptions to education. About 15% of the respondents said that their education had been interrupted: obviously among these older students war and national service were most frequently mentioned (46% of distance education students who answered this question, 30% in liberal adult education and 25% LEA). Next among the responses came lack of money and then marriage and having a family.

We also asked whether currently studying caused any real domestic difficulties. Over 80% of the respondents said no.

Summary

Findings on respondents' background are presented in four groups, broadly representing distance education, liberal adult education, LEA provision and the Open University. The age and sex distribution of students in distance education differs from the rest. The full range of educational levels and occupations was found in all groups of respondents; there are more LEA students without formal qualifications and more distance students with higher educational qualifications; professions are well represented in all groups, though less so among LEA students, where a larger percentage are in clerical or service jobs. Over 90% in all groups had had some form of post-school education or training and most intend to go on studying. Most of the respondents had enjoyed school. Some had had an interrupted education. Only 20% said that current studying causes any real domestic problems.

Reference

1. op. cit. page 10.

CHAPTER 4 : SUBJECTS OF STUDY

We asked students what they were currently studying. More than a hundred subjects were quoted in the replies. In order to get an overall view and to be able to compare the different institutions we arranged the subjects into nine broad subject categories. We added a tenth category 'None', in order to show those respondents who said that they had been studying recently, but were not doing so at the time when they received the questionnaire.

Replies for each separate institution are given in Appendix 7.

In the tables which follow we show the replies in three groups of institutions.

4.1 Students' Choice of Subject

Figure 1

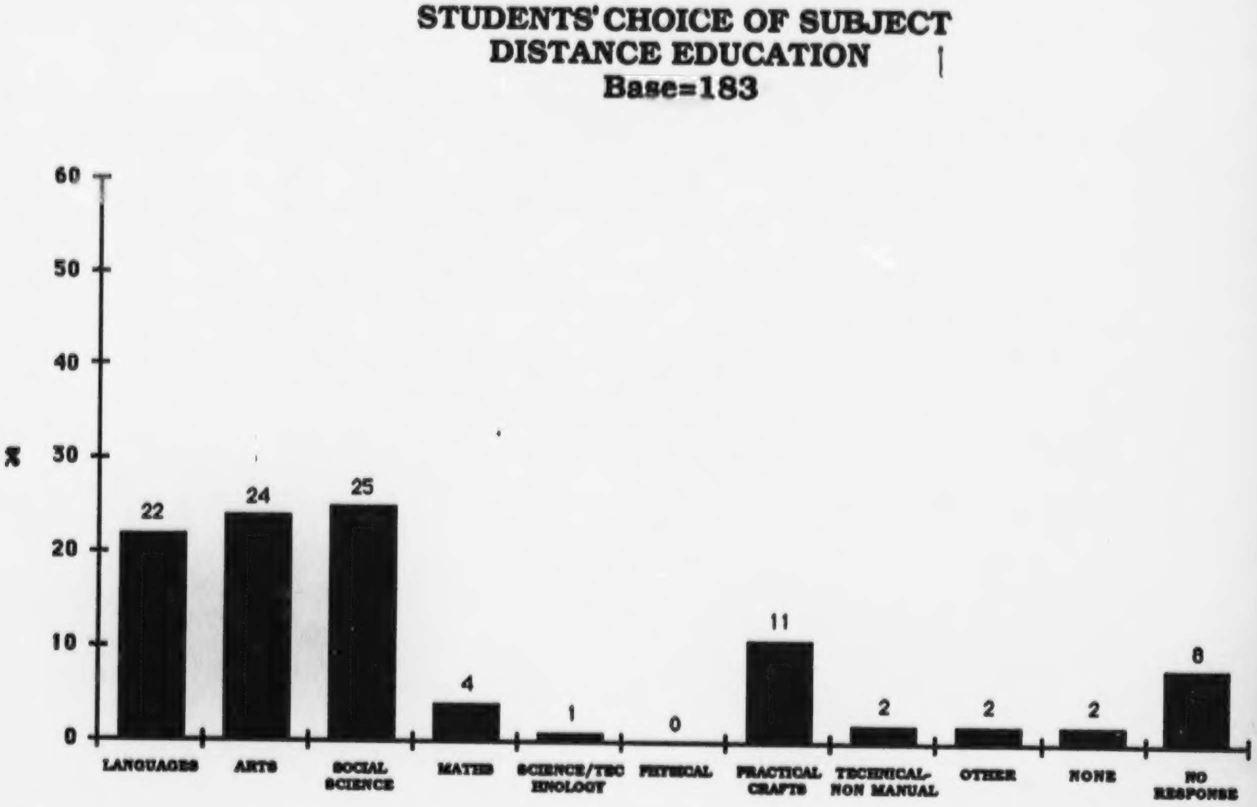


Figure 2

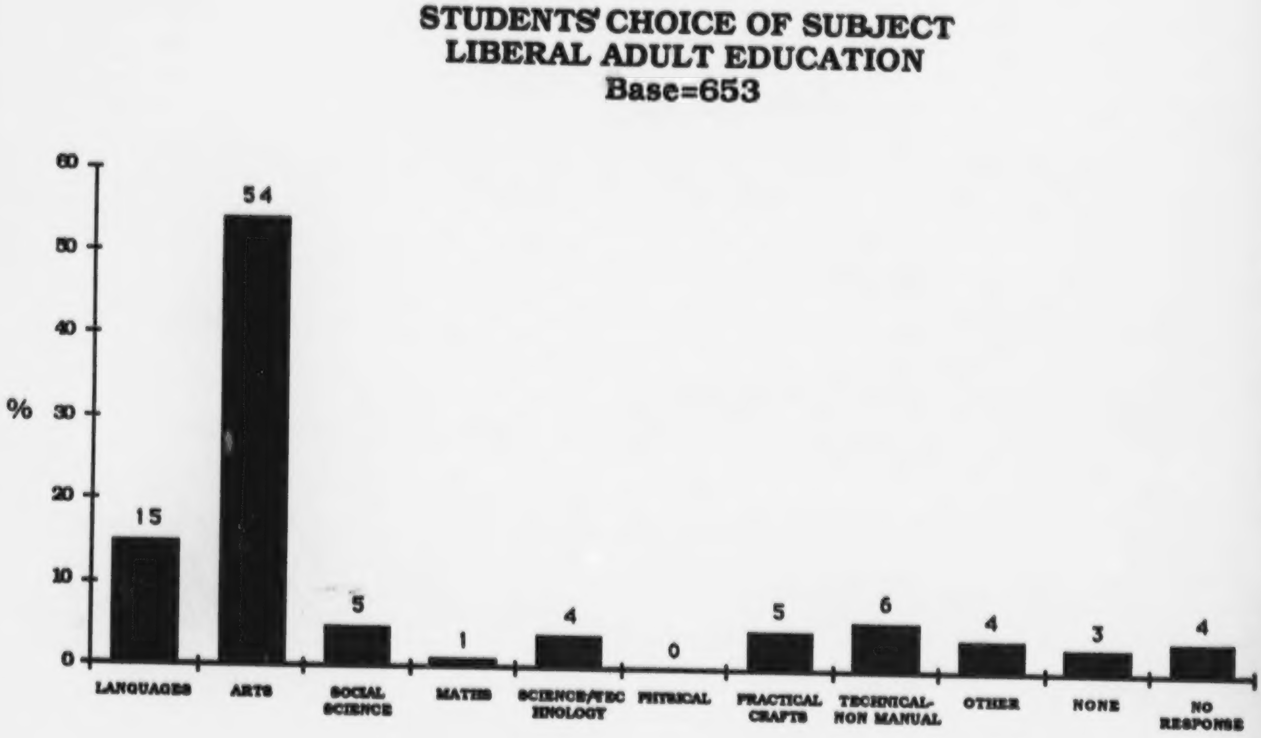
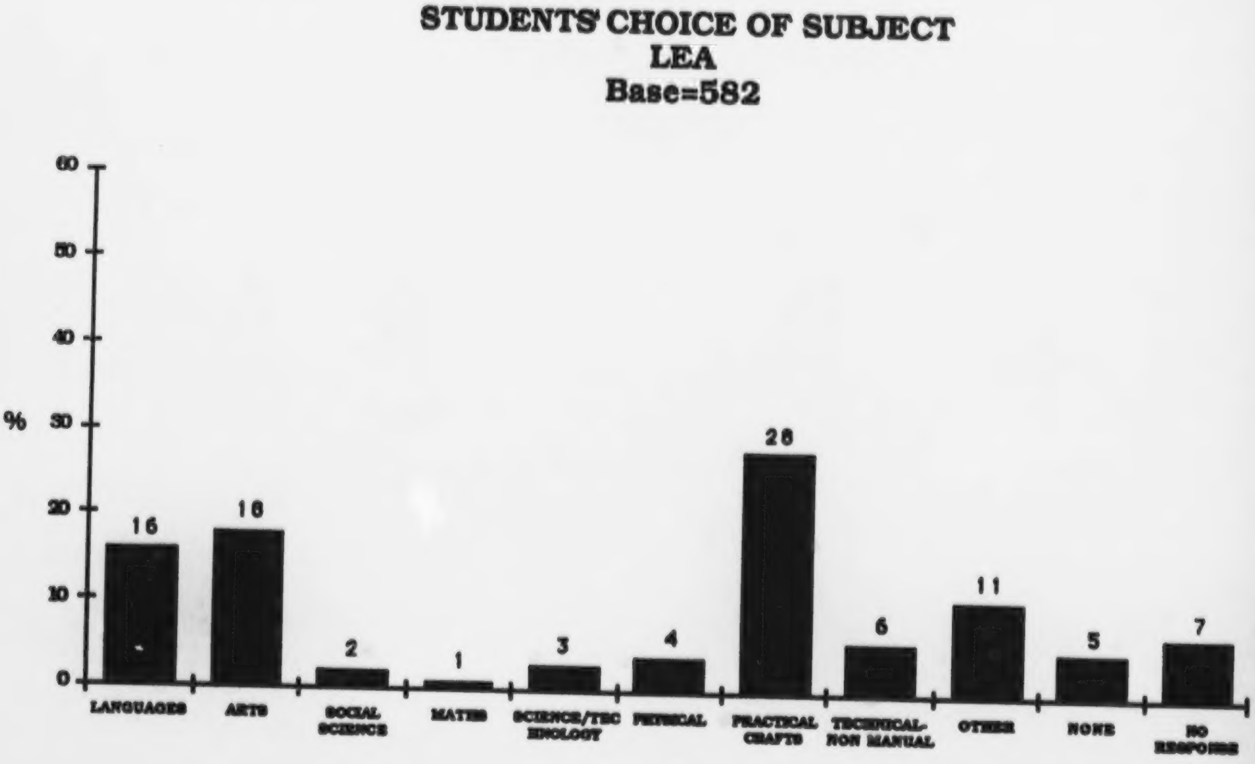

STUDENTS' CHOICE OF SUBJECT
LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION
Base=653

Figure 3


STUDENTS' CHOICE OF SUBJECT
LEA
Base=582

We looked at the replies in the context of what subject areas were offered by each institution. We had the prospectuses of WEA, Extra-Mural and LEA institutions and we analysed these and grouped the subjects offered into our ten categories. We were not able to do this for Wolsey Hall, London University (External Students) and Universities of the Third Age, whose information could not be classified in the same way. The results of analysis by institution are given in Appendix 3.

The percentage of older students in each subject area corresponds very broadly to what is offered by the institution in which they were studying; in many cases there appears to be no marked difference between older students and other adult students. The one exception is in the case of physical activities: these play a large part in the programmes of LEA institutions, but the percentage of older students enrolling is small.

In all types of institution the percentage of respondents studying foreign languages is quite high. Arts (the range of humanities subjects) were chosen by more than half of the respondents in liberal adult education, where these subjects have a large place in the total programme. A quarter of the respondents in distance education appear as studying social science, but this total is mainly made up of London University External Students (30 in all), who were studying Law; the numbers are low in other institutions. In the LEA institutions more than a quarter of the respondents were following courses in practical crafts; and this again reflects what features largely in their programmes. If we add the category 'Other', which includes many quasi-recreational activities, the percentage doing non-academic work rises to about 40%. Even where physical activities are offered, as we have said, the percentage involved is small. Overall the percentages of respondents studying mathematics, science and technology are low, but our analysis of programmes showed that the number of courses offered in these fields in most institutions is low too. We have used Technical (non-manual) to describe courses, such as those in counselling and teaching methods, which are theoretical and specialised, but do not fit into any of the other categories.

How far do the subjects quoted by the respondents reflect their main interest or their first choice? Do some have a limited choice locally and accept what is on offer?

Open University students' courses need to be looked at in a different way. The Open University has six faculties: Arts, Social Science, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Education. An OU student must first choose a Foundation Course in one of the first five faculties in order to start a degree programme. After completing a Foundation Course successfully, students may then make up their degree programme by doing a second Foundation Course, if they have no exemption for previous qualifications, and by choosing a series of higher level courses to make a total of six or eight credits for an ordinary or honours degree. The courses may be chosen from any of the six faculties or interdisciplinary courses.

The students who were aged 60 or over in 1985 had chosen courses as follows:

Table 6 Open University Students' Choice of Faculty in 1985

Base = Finally registered students in 1985

Faculty	Students aged 60 or over	All students
	%	%
Arts	52	22
Social Science	17	17
Mathematics	8	16
Science	10	14
Technology	7	21
Education	2	6
Interdisciplinary courses	4	4

It is noticeable that 25% of older Open University students chose courses in Mathematics, Science or Technology.

4.2 Intention to Continue To Study

We asked students whether they intended to continue studying, when their present course finished;

Table 7 Study Intentions

Subject Base-respondents	Distance Education 183	Liberal Adult Ed. 653	LEA 582
	%	%	%
More courses of a similar type	20	66	63
At an academically more demanding level	19	5	4
Something totally different	5	5	5
Informally (reading, etc.)	25	8	4
Don't know	21	5	7
Definitely not	8	1	1
No reply	2	6	11
More than one type of study	1	5	6

Two thirds of the respondents in liberal adult education and LEA courses replied that they intended to do something similar, which may suggest that they are satisfied with what is available, or at least prepared to accept it. The number who replied 'definitely not' to this question was only 22.

Some have settled in one institution:

> *'I would like to say that I have undertaken non-vocational and vocational study for around twenty-two years at the same college of further education and have enjoyed it immensely'* was a comment added by one respondent.

Others move around:

> *'My answers refer to experience of study (A Level) undertaken prior to the OU course.'*
>
> *'At present I attend Alliance Francaise language classes and activities and am on the point of taking part in Spanish conversation via the U3A.'*

There may be practical difficulties which affect course choice:

> *'I joined the art class, but found transport very difficult. It is too cold at my age to wait for buses. If there was transport I would like to go swimming (to help my arthritis) and also to do flower arranging.'*

Respondents in the distance education group gave more varied replies to the question about their future study plans: 20% intend to do something similar, and

19% want to do something more demanding; a quarter said that they will continue to study, but informally.

14% of all the respondents were following courses which lead to a qualification, though comments made by some suggest that their intentions vary:

> *'I have no intention of sitting any exams, and enjoy the relaxed back and forth of the correspondence course.'*
>
> *'I am determined to get this O Level.'*

A third of the respondents were currently studying two or more courses: 52% of those in liberal adult education, 16% in distance education and 27% in LEA classes. Comments added, or the subject of the second course, suggest that the other course in some cases was being followed in a different institution.

We did not in 1985 ask older Open University students what their future study plans were. When we put this question in our previous questionnaire nearly two-thirds of the respondents intended to continue studying after getting their degree, either with the OU or other institutions, or informally. A quarter were not sure what they would do, and only 2% had definitely decided not to undertake further study.

Table 8 Open University Students' Study Intentions (from 1984 report)

Base = respondents	861
	%
Other OU studies - associate short courses or pack	34
Don't know	25
Informally (reading, etc.)	19
A second degree with OU	8
With another institution	2
Definitely not	2
Other alternatives	8
No reply	2

Summary

Respondents' choice of subjects largely reflect the pattern of provision in the different institutions. The majority said that they intend to continue studying when their present course finishes.

CHAPTER 5 - REASONS FOR STUDY

5.1 Student Motivation

Students surveyed from the distance education, liberal adult education and the LEA organisations were asked to indicate all of their reasons for studying, and then to give their main reason. The findings are presented in Figures 4, 5 and 6. For comparative purposes responses to a very similar question included as part of the first OU study (1984) are shown in Figure 7.

The findings do show some differences between individual students and variations in emphasis between the four institutional groupings. However, what is most striking is the similarity of student motives across a wide spectrum of courses and modes of study.

5.1.1 Reasons for Study

It is clear that the desire to keep mentally alert, to pursue subject interests, and to continue their own personal development, are themes common to many older learners.

Approximately 60-70% of respondents in all four groups said they were studying because they wanted to keep their mind active.

Between a half and two-thirds of respondents in the distance, liberal adult education and LEA groups wished to develop an interest in a particular area. A third (34%) of the OU respondents also said that they wanted to pursue particular interests.

Around half of the distance, liberal adult education and OU students were studying to continue developing as a person and to stretch themselves, as were nearly four in ten (38%) respondents from the LEA organisations.

These themes are reinforced in students' written comments:

> *'I have been retired for many years and always taken an adult educational class: woodwork, French. I have found that the classes are a most valuable aid to enable retired folk to lead a far more interesting life. It keeps like minds from rusting and the social contacts enable us to broaden our outlook'*
>
> (North Essex Student)

> *'I left school at 14 years of age, but I continued to attend night school for various subjects over the years, e.g. Spanish, German, French, Typewriting and Shorthand, Dressmaking, Woodwork, Mathematics, Dancing, Home Furnishing, Cooking and Public Speaking. All the courses I have done have been mainly because I must be doing something of interest to me and now at my age to keep me active mentally and physically.'*
>
> (Lancashire Student)

> *'I studied for GCE (O Level) in Literature as I am particularly interested in Literature. It gave me an opportunity to really study in detail several books and poems and to enjoy concentration on Literature in a fuller and wider way than I had been able to do at any time (having had a very incomplete education). The same applies to History; both exams opened the doors to further reading and study.'*
>
> (U3A student)

There are also some interesting differences between the groups. Approximately half of the respondents from the liberal adult education and LEA groups (50% liberal adult education, 47% LEA) mentioned that they hoped study would help them to make friends and meet people. In comparison this was a consideration for only about one in ten of the distance education (8%) and OU (11%) respondents. Liberal adult education and LEA students seem more likely to be studying to fill in the extra leisure time now available to them.

However, a higher proportion of distance education and OU students appear to be interested in obtaining some kind of qualification or a degree. This was given as a reason by over half of the OU respondents (56%) and nearly three in ten of the distance education respondents (28%), compared with only 7% of the liberal adult education and 8% of the LEA respondents. Distance education and OU students also tended to be seeking a stimulating challenge and were studying to prove something to themselves.

The OU group is distinctive in that the concept of the OU as the "University of the second chance" appears to have meaning for two-thirds (65%) of the OU students who replied to this question in the 1984 study; they said that one of their reasons for studying was to make up for the lack of educational opportunities in the past. In contrast this is given as motive by far fewer respondents in the other three groups, distance education (32%), liberal adult education (31%) and LEA (24%). This suggests that the OU meets a specific need for access to university level courses.

When students gave their main reason for studying a similar pattern is evident; 20%-30% of respondents from the distance, liberal adult education and LEA groups study primarily to develop a particular interest, and approximately 10%-15% of respondents in all four groups are motivated by a desire to keep their minds active, to stretch themselves and to continue their own development. Obtaining a qualification or a degree is important for 10% of the distance education and 13% of the OU respondents, but is of little concern to the great majority of liberal adult education and LEA respondents. The main reason for studying of one in ten (12%) OU respondents was to make up for missed opportunities in the past.

The recent study of mature students (over 21) by Woodley et al[1] asked some similar questions about reasons for study. Among students in extra-mural departments, WEA, and LEA adult education, 42% of all respondents chose items relating to self-development to describe their main aim in studying, and 46% of the 61+ age group did so (and 20% of these specified 'to keep my mind active' as their main aim).

The broad similarity of motives is also reflected in open-ended comments which indicate that these are students who have been actively engaged in education for much of their life, and may well have experience of a wide range of courses and study programmes offered at LEA colleges, university extra-mural departments, WEA, distance teaching institutions, and more recently with local U3As.

Summary

Students were asked to state their motives for studying and to indicate their main motive. There is an overall similarity of motives: keeping the mind active and an interest in a particular subject were most frequently mentioned.

Thus the majority of those questioned from a variety of educational institutions revealed a continuing commitment to learning for personal interest and development.

Reference

1. Op. cit. page 10.

FIGURE 4 DISTANCE EDUCATION
Reasons for wanting to study

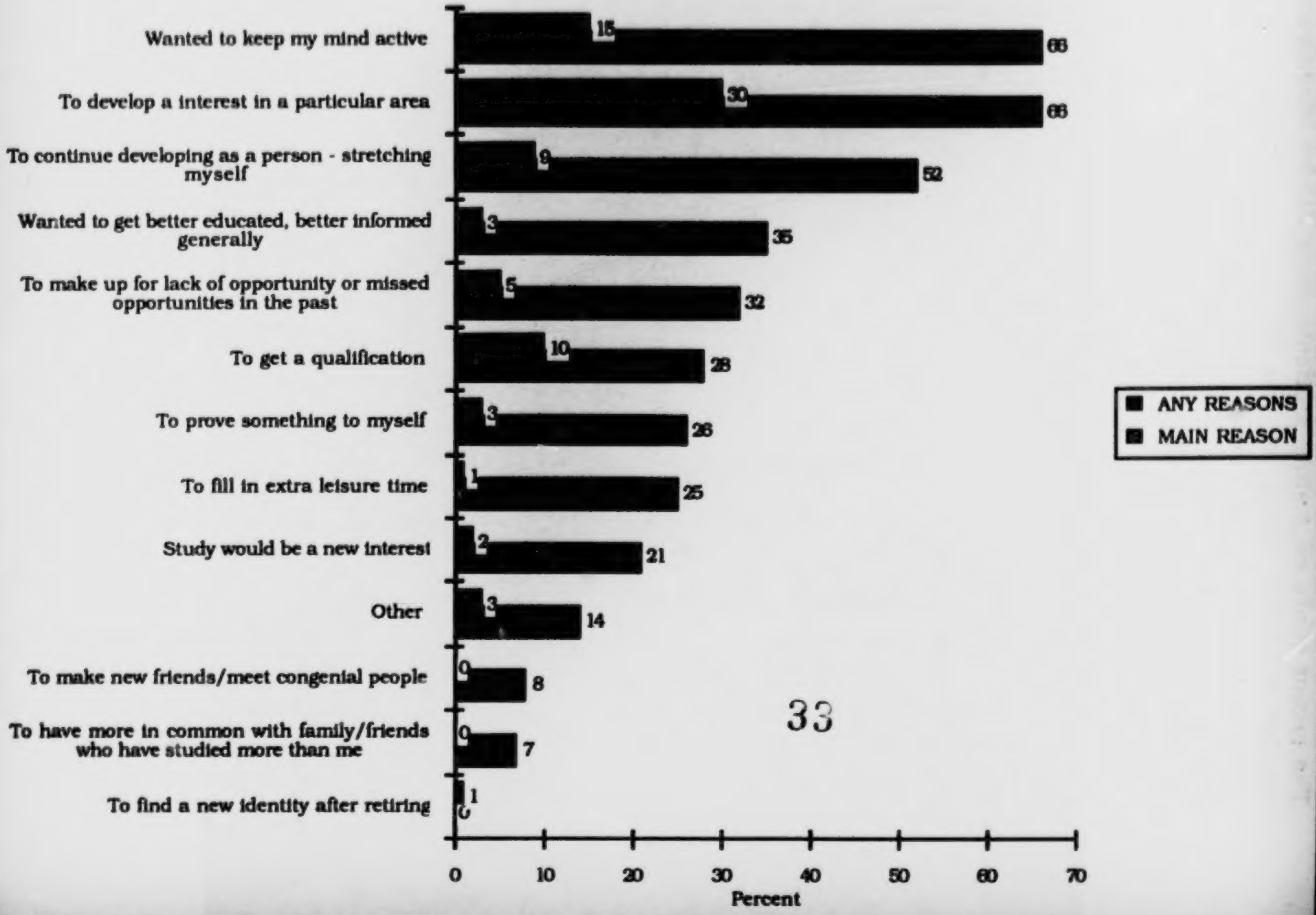


FIGURE 5 LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION
Reasons for wanting to study

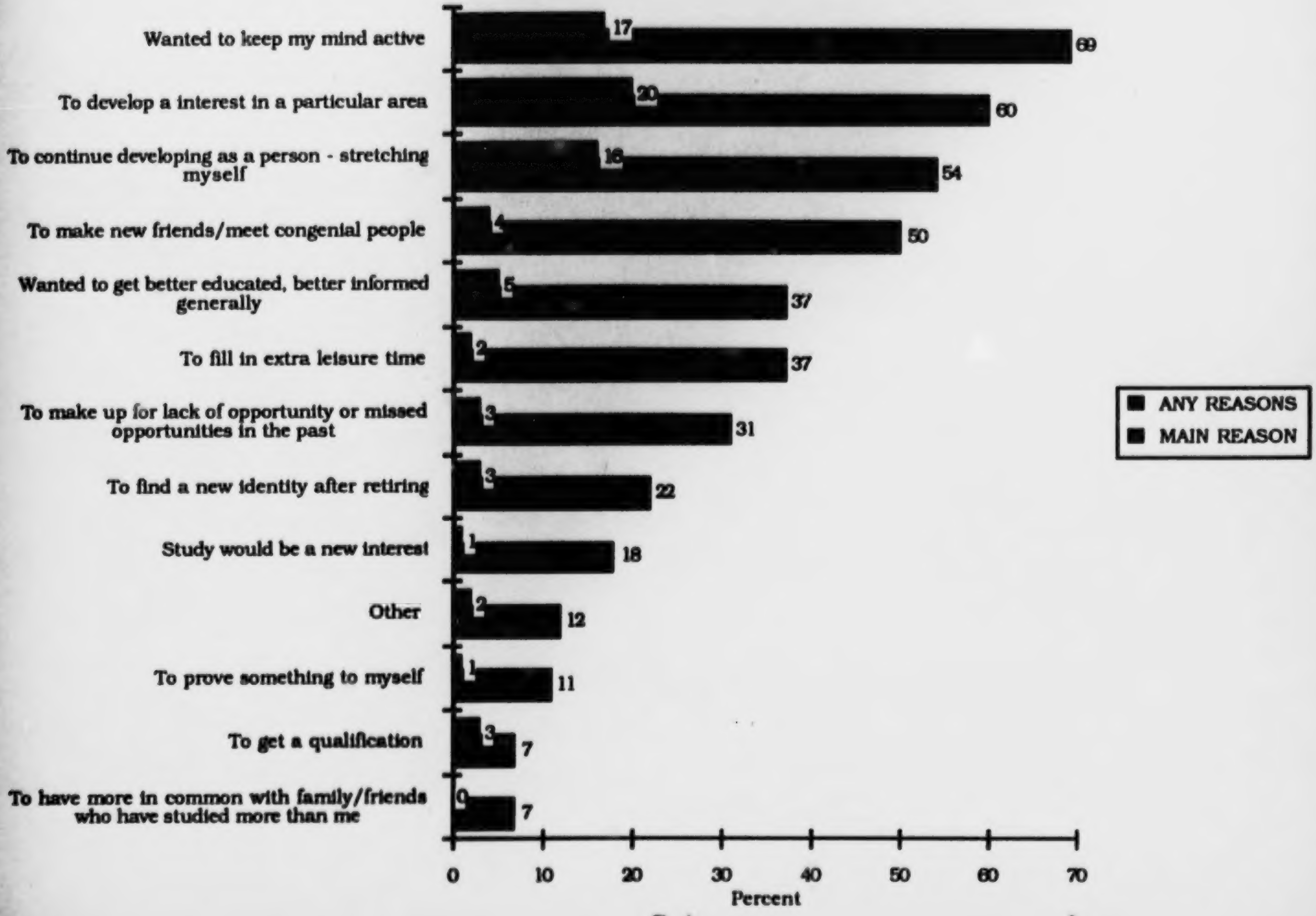


FIGURE 6 LEA ORGANISATIONS
Reasons for wanting to study

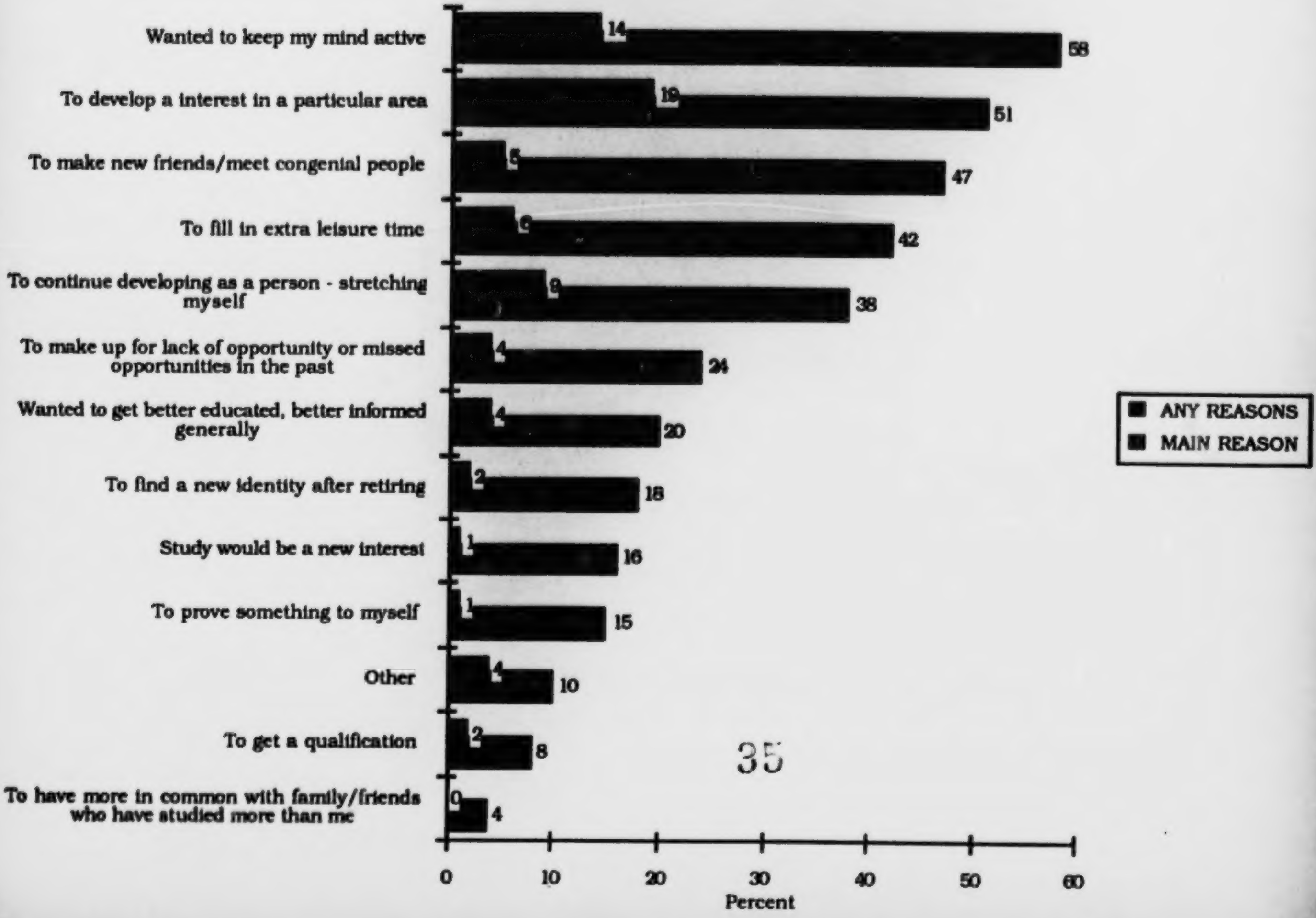
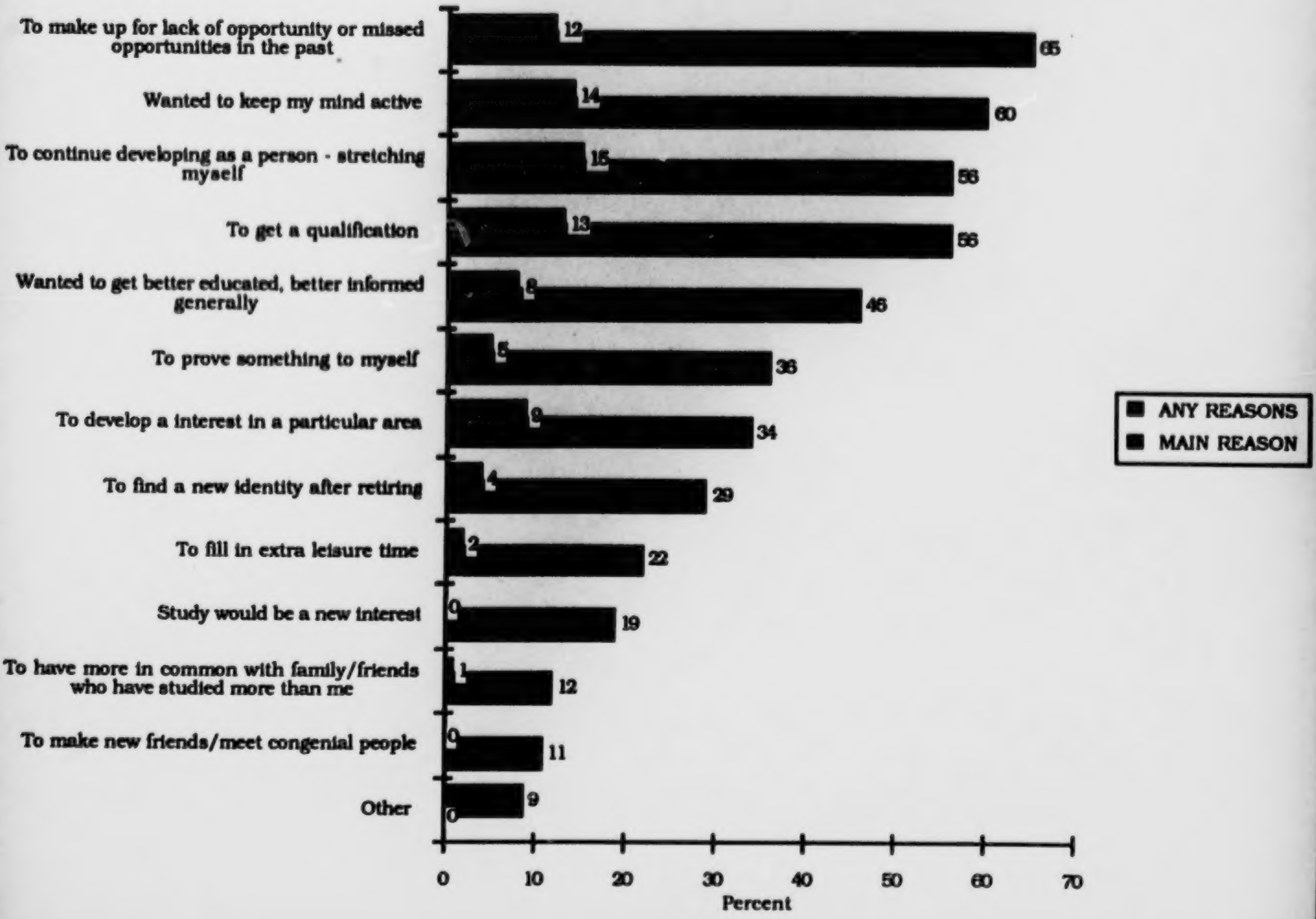


FIGURE 7 OPEN UNIVERSITY (1984)
Reasons for wanting to study



CHAPTER 6 - STUDY METHODS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDY

6.1 Organisation of Study

We sought to compare the attitudes and approach to study of older students in a range of educational settings. One aspect which we were also interested in examining was the possible difference in the experience of study in traditional face-to-face teaching programmes and distance teaching/open learning systems, broadly represented, on the one hand, by the liberal adult education and LEA groups and, on the other, by the distance education and OU groups.

We did not have sufficient resources to draw a sample large enough to permit analysis by type of course within institutions, even though the duration, academic level, and course structure provide an important context for discussion of student study patterns and study methods. However, we felt that it would be useful to take the first steps towards creating a picture of how students organised their learning, in order to gain an insight into the effectiveness or otherwise of the study techniques used by older students. It was difficult to devise a set of questions to take account of the wide variety of types of study, and therefore we informed those completing the questionnaire that they could well find some of the options given irrelevant to their particular study programme.

6.1.1 Individual and Group Study

A question about student preferences for working on their own or with others produced varied responses, and it seems clear that the question has been interpreted in different ways by the respondents. Eight in ten (82%) respondents from the distance institutions, and three-quarters (74%) of the OU students, showed a strong preference for working on their own.

Despite the fact that courses for students in liberal adult education and in LEA institutions are mainly based on class work, half of the liberal adult education respondents, and just over a third (36%) of the LEA respondents, said that in general they preferred to work on their own. We believe that the form of this question has produced possibly contradictory responses (Appendix 8).

6.1.2 Weekly Study Patterns

Students were asked to indicate how much time they devoted to study in a typical week. The responses must be treated with some caution, because the "typical week" is an ideal, and in reality students' study patterns are shaped by many factors, including their own knowledge and skills, and other interests and responsibilities which they may have.

It is clear that many older students make a considerable commitment to study. In the liberal adult education and LEA groups combined a third of the respondents say they undertook some study on two or three days a week, and around one in ten (9% LEA colleges, 12% liberal adult education) studied every day.

A much higher proportion of respondents from the distance education and OU groups studied on most days or every day, probably reflecting greater reading and assessment requirements. More than a third (36%) of the distance education students reported working for four or five days a week, and three in ten (30%) claimed to do some studying every day. Rather more (57%) OU students worked on most days, and slightly fewer (28%) did some studying each day.

Although there are considerable variations, the general pattern among the liberal adult education/LEA respondents suggests that many are likely to study for between one to three days a week, usually for up to two hours a day, though some may work for up to four hours. Very few respondents from either of these groups claim to work for more than four hours a day.

In comparison, distance education and OU respondents are more likely to study for longer each week and for a longer period each day. Many work for between two to four hours a day, and 13% of the distance respondents and 16% of the OU respondents claim to work for four to six hours a day most days or every day.

Details of responses on time spent in study are given in Appendix 8

6.2 Weekly Study Activities

Students were also asked to give a profile of their study activities during a typical week covering the amount of time spent in tutorials, reading course materials, preparing assignments and in private study.

6.2.1 Tutorials

The group tutorial is the main teaching medium on most liberal adult education and LEA college courses. Therefore it is not surprising that three in ten respondents from both groups (29% liberal adult education, 29% LEAs) spend one to two hours a week in classes. A further third (32%) of the liberal adult education students attend tutorials for between three to six hours a week as do 17% of the students taking LEA courses.

Although the OU is often thought of as essentially a distance teaching institution, the responses show that two-thirds (64%) of older OU students go to a study centre for tutorials in a typical week. This figure seems high, and it is possible that students may have averaged out attendance over the academic year. Tutorial provision is one area in which the OU differs from "pure" distance systems. Three-quarters (77%) of the distance education respondents did not reply to this question, probably because it was not applicable. Under a quarter (23%) of the distance group attended any tutorials in a typical week.

6.2.2 Course Material

Correspondence texts form the principal component of the OU teaching system, and half of the OU respondents say they spend between eight to fifteen hours a week on their course units and set books. Turning to the distance education organisations which also make extensive use of correspondence teaching, there are considerable variations in the amount of time spent reading course materials. At one end of the range almost half (49%) of the distance group work on written texts for between one and six hours a week. At the other, 17% work for ten to twenty or more hours a week. This reflects the variety of provision, from short non-assessed courses, to professional and undergraduate programmes offered by the National Extension College, Wolsey Hall and London University (External).

The liberal adult education and LEA institutions make much less use of written teaching materials, and students from these groups spend a small amount of time working with course texts. Close to three in ten (28%) liberal adult education respondents, and nearly two in ten (17%) LEA respondents, spend one to two hours a week reading course books and other materials, but nearly half (47%) of the liberal adult education and three-quarters (73%) of the LEA respondents did not reply to this question.

6.2.3 Assessed Work

Assessment is not relevant for many older students in the liberal adult education and LEA groups who are taking courses which do not lead to qualifications and are not examined in any way. Around eight in ten in both groups (77% liberal adult education, 83% LEA) did not reply to the question and only about one in ten (13% liberal adult education and 9% LEA) spent one or two hours a week preparing assignments.

A higher proportion of the distance education group was taking courses which involved an assessment component. Nearly half (48%) spent between one and four hours a week preparing assessed work, and a few (8%) said they devoted seven or more hours to assignments.

Continuous assessment counts for half of the overall grade on OU undergraduate level courses, and the completion of assignments is an important activity for students. A quarter (24%) work for two hours on tutor-marked assignments, and a further three in ten spend three to four hours preparing assessed work. In addition two in ten (19%) claim they spend seven or more hours a week on assignments. This is quite a high figure and may represent the time it takes on average to complete an assignment rather than the hours spent each week.

6.2.4 Other Study Activities

One of the characteristics of many older learners is that they tend to take a wide ranging interest in the subject area they have chosen to study, and are likely to look beyond a particular course and to follow up complementary or interesting issues through additional reading, visits or practical activities. Nearly two in ten (18%) LEA respondents spend up to two hours a week in extra reading and private study, and so do around a quarter of the distance education (23%) and liberal adult education (26%) respondents, and more than four in ten (46%) OU respondents.

6.3 Study Aids

We have seen that most respondents had some further education or training after leaving school. However, those returning to study after many years might be expected to have rusty study skills. The single most important study aid for students in all four groups was their own written notes.

> *'I find... using margins and underlining more productive of progress than making formal notes.'*
>
> *'Reading through notes and underlining the salient points; and learning formulae.'* was the method of a LEA Mathematics student.

The only other study resource considered very important by a significant number was their local or a national library. Predictably, distance education students and OU students made considerable use of highlighters to underline key sections in the written course materials.

Respondents made little use of technological study aids such as photocopiers, cassette recorders for taking notes, or video recorders for relevant TV programmes, perhaps for reasons of availability, cost, or relevance. We did not ask students about word processors, but it will be interesting to see whether the advent of cheap word processing systems will have any impact as an aid to study.

6.4 Undertaking Concentrated Study

There are some negative images which associate age with loss of memory, powers of concentration and general intellectual decline. Our earlier OU study (1984) revealed that memory in particular was regarded as a major issue by nearly half (47%) of the older OU students, though in practice only a quarter (26%) said that they had had difficulties. Stereotypes portraying older people as tiring quickly and unable to study for more than a brief period receive little support from responses to a question about students' ability to undertake concentrated study.

Approximately 40% to 50% of respondents in all four groups say that they can maintain concentrated study for one to two hours, and 22% of the distance education group and 25% of the OU respondents believe they are able to study continuously for up to three hours. Less than forty respondents in total admit being able to study for no more than thirty minutes before needing a break.

Personal preference and temperament may play an important part:

> *'I prefer to study in keeping with mood and energy rhythms rather than to an over rigid inflexible timetable. I believe I get the best results this way.'* wrote a London University External student.
>
> *'I set aside two hours every day for studies... sometimes a day had to be left out, but I tried to remedy this by working longer hours the next day.'* said a former OU student.

TABLE 9 Ability to Undertake Concentrated Study

	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEAs Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
Less than 30 minutes	-	2	1	*
30 mins to 1 hour	24	23	18	19
1 to 2 hours	43	47	36	51
2 to 3 hours	22	13	14	25
More than 3 hours	10	5	4	5
No reply	*	10	26	*

* less than 0.5%

6.5 Coping with the Pace of Study

The general approach and study techniques adopted by older students appear to be fairly effective. Ability to keep pace with a course is one criterion of the efficiency of study methods. Around half the respondents from each group say that they are usually up to date with their course. Respondents from the distance education and OU groups appear to be under greatest pressure. Whilst less than two in ten liberal adult education and LEA respondents (17% liberal adult education, 10% LEA colleges) claimed to be a little or well behind, three in ten (29%) OU students and four in ten (38%) distance education students report being a little behind or well behind with their work.

Where there were problems these tended to be linked with external or domestic pressures, some comments suggest:

> *'I tried an OU course, but I had to give it up, because I had my aged mother with me and could not fit it in with caring for her.,* said a U3A student.
>
> *'Once a course starts it goes on continuously for 32 weeks and this can raise a conflict of commitments, particularly in the summer months, when house maintenance and other domestic responsibilities clamour for attention,'* was a comment from an OU student.

TABLE 10 Coping with the Pace of Study

	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEAs Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
Usually on schedule	49	57	52	52
Usually a little behind	21	14	9	27
Usually well behind	17	3	1	3
Usually a little ahead	6	4	5	14
Usually well ahead	1	2	2	4
No reply	6	21	31	1

It might be argued that these replies should not be taken too seriously because students are naturally reluctant to admit to falling behind with their work. However, we think it likely that the majority of older students do manage to keep up to date. Our research suggests that older students do not take the decision to enrol for a course lightly, and become committed and conscientious students who are willing to find the time needed to do justice to their studies. This view is reinforced by the reaction of those who do fall behind. The main response by students in all four groups is simply to work hard and try to catch up. Only those students who admitted being a little or well behind (a quarter of the total respondents) replied to this question (Table 10).

Though the number of respondents in the LEA and distance education groups is very small, it is worth noting how few older students seek help from their tutor. Assistance from the tutor hardly appears in the list of student strategies.

Tutorial help may simply not be available:

> *'At my age I am finding memorising of facts more difficult than forty years ago. The notes my tutors write are inadequate. I need personal contact and this is not possible'* wrote a London University external student.

It is probable that some courses have no or a very limited amount of tutor contact, but even in the Open University, where it is stressed that the role of tuition and counselling staff embraces a broad responsibility to support student learning and progress, only 3% of those who fell behind contacted their tutor, and only 4% sought permission to submit assignments late. One area for further research would be to examine whether older students tend to have a very traditional view of the tutor/student relationship which militates against seeking help.

Do tutors always fully explore ways of helping older students?

> *'Sometimes they are not trained as teachers, they are only professional practitioners.'*

But there are positive views too, as stated by a U3A student:

> *'Our tutor is three years older than I. She prepares handouts, poetry, phrase and grammatical passages...I think the tutor does more work than we do.'*

Do older students assume greater personal responsibility for managing their progress?

> *'The way one studies and the way one learns change as you get older. In many ways I learn better and more thoroughly than when I was a young student.'* wrote a LEA student.
>
> *'As I got older I found that I undertook study on a broader basis, taking an overall view of a topic, instead of becoming bogged down by detail.'*

TABLE 11 Action Taken By Students Who Fall Behind

	Distance Education Base = 69	Liberal Adult Education Base = 107	LEAs Base = 58	OU Base = 663
	%	%	%	%
Work harder to catch up	41	40	59	40
Concentrate on necessary work	-	2	2	12
Leave out chunks	1	1	-	14
Skim material	1	-	-	3
Ask for extra time	1	2	-	3
Re-schedule work	13	1	-	5
Consult tutor	-	1	3	3
Other	29	28	12	4
No reply	13	25	24	16

6.6 Examinations

Our 1984 study of older OU students showed that 42% were worried about their ability to cope successfully with written examinations, and that of these just over a quarter (27%) felt that their worries had been justified. These fears were supported by the official exam scores which revealed a 5% poorer exam pass rate for older students.

We were aware that many older students in adult education would be taking courses which were not examined and, in fact, only 14% of all respondents (apart from OU students) were taking courses which led to an examination; but we thought it would be useful to explore the effectiveness of the revision strategies employed by older students, given that examinations are stressful and make rigorous demands on concentration, memory and stamina.

> *'My professional work obviously gave me study training, but writing exam papers with a set time is quite taxing since one has no*

> *set approach to topics and a slower memory retention than when younger.'*

But they are not stressful for all:

> *'As for exams I actually like them! Perhaps it is the cathartic element.'*

Given the low or very low numbers of respondents from the distance education group and especially from the LEA and liberal adult education groups, it would be unwise to do more than note there do not appear to be radical differences in the examination strategies of older students (Appendix 8).

However, it is feasible to consider the responses from the OU group. It is interesting that although many older OU students claim that they are not interested in qualifications as such, most do take the exam seriously and very few (2%) say they do little or no preparation. Passing the exam seems to be important as a formal recognition of students' knowledge and understanding.

Five aspects of exam revision were mentioned by more than six in ten: going through assignments and tutors' comments, memorising key facts and concepts, working through specimen exam papers, going through students' own notes thoroughly and increasing study time. Students' most important preparation for the exam was to go through their notes carefully (mentioned by 22%),. followed by re-reading all the course material (mentioned by 18%). Such a pattern of responses is broadly similar for all four groups.

Some would regard the approach to exams taken by OU students as being a rather general strategy and not necessarily the most effective use of limited revision time. The emphasis on going through notes and re-reading all of the course material suggests that older OU students may genuinely attempt to review the whole course. It is possible that older students taking courses with an examination may be at a double disadvantage. Exams put a premium on sustaining mental and physical effort for a concentrated period and, in addition, because older people may have no recent experience of exams and are studying primarily for interest, they may lack revision skills or be unwilling to gear their learning to passing exams.

6.7 Summary

There are difficulties in comparing the study methods of the older students surveyed, not least because each of the three adult education groups used (distance education, liberal adult education, LEAs) is composed of a number of institutions and organizations which between them offer a wide range of courses and study opportunities. Despite the institutional and individual student variations, some broad trends are appparent.

Students reveal a similarity of approach to many general, non course-specific aspects of study. For example, an ability to sustain concentrated study for one to two hours is claimed by a significant proportion of respondents in all four groups. Around half in each group say that they are usually up to date with their work, and those who fall behind adopt the same strategy; they work harder to catch up. In addition there are few differences in the way older students prepare for exams. Thorough revision of students' own notes was generally considered the most important strategy. However, it must be remembered that the number responding to this question in some groups is very low, and the findings may not be reliable.

Returning to an issue raised at the start of the chapter, the responses do suggest that there are differences between the distance and face to face groups in relation to type of course and study orientation. Respondents from the distance education and OU groups spend more time studying and longer working with written materials and preparing assessed work. This is not surprising, since distance teaching uses correspondence texts, and all OU students and the majority of distance education students were taking courses which were examined. The distance education and OU groups are also distinctive in that students showed a marked preference for studying on their own.

CHAPTER 7 : THE APPROACHES TO STUDY INVENTORY (ASI)

Introduction

The second part of our questionnaire asks a series of questions about the mechanics of older student study methods - how long and how often they studied; how did they prepare for examinations and so on. Whilst the answers to the questions confirmed our impressions from our first survey of Open University students of an extremely hard working group of students, the questions did not tackle some deeper issues underlying their study strategies or relate these to a conceptual framework.

We had wished to investigate their learning processes at this level and we thought that the most promising approach was through the considerable body of work undertaken in the 1970s by certain British and Swedish psychologists.(1,3) Their method was to employ a quantitative approach through the use of refined questionnaires and psychometric techniques to identify characteristic approaches to studying. In the course of this work the Approaches to Study Inventory was developed by Entwistle et al.(1,3) This was then used extensively with British and Australian undergraduate students as well as with a sample of OU students.(2,4,5) We decided, therefore, to incorporate the Approaches to Study Inventory into our own questionnaire. Some minor textual modifications had to be made in order to use the Inventory with part-time adult students.

The complete Inventory (Section 3 of the questionnaire) appears in Appendix 11.

7.1 Description of the Inventory

The Inventory consists of 64 statements about approaches to academic work. Beside each statement are five numbers and students are asked to select the one which best conforms with their view of their study approach.

The five responses are:

4 Definitely agree
3 Agree with reservations
2 To be used only if the item does not apply to you or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer
1 Disagree with reservations
0 Definitely disagree.

The 64 statements appear in random order in the Inventory, but are grouped into 16 sub-scales for the purpose of analysis. These sub-scales represent the 16 different conceptual characteristics which research has suggested constitute students' approaches to study. The value of the Inventory is that its sub-scales measure differences which appear to have a close relationship with the quality of students' learning.

The sub-scales are detailed below with a brief explanation of their meaning.

Subscale	Meaning
Deep approach	Active questioning in learning
Inter-relating ideas	Relating to other parts in the course
Use of evidence	Relating evidence to conclusions
Intrinsic motivation	Interest in learning for learning's sake
Surface approach	Preoccupation with memorisation
Syllabus-boundness	Relying on staff to define learning tasks
Fear of failure	Pessimism and anxiety about academic outcomes
Improvidence	Over-cautious reliance on details
Disorganized study methods	Unable to work regularly and effectively
Negative attitudes to studying	Lack of interest and application
Globetrotting	Over-readiness to jump to conclusions
Achievement motivation	Competitive and confident
Extrinsic motivation	Interest in courses for the qualifications they offer
Strategic approach	Awareness of implications of academic demands made by staff
Comprehension learning	Readiness to map out subject area and think divergently
Operation learning	Emphasis on facts and logical analysis

Most of the sub-scales contain four statements; for example, the four statements of the sub-scale 'deep approach', which is defined as an 'active questioning in learning', are detailed below to illustrate a typical sub-scale.

> *I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read.*
>
> *I often find myself questioning things I read in books or see or hear on Educational TV or Radio.*
>
> *I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult.*
>
> *When I am tackling a new topic I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer.*

A student using such a deep approach would be expected to score highly on this sub-scale, possibly scoring as high as 16 - the maximum possible. In contrast, a student not using this approach would score much lower.

The scores of each student's responses for each sub-scale were totalled and the mean calculated. The scores have no absolute meaning as such; the adopted measure of analysis is to compare the mean of each sub-scale with the results of other users of the Inventory.

Table 12 below details the means for each of our four groups of students as well as those of conventional undergraduates in the United Kingdom.(4)

Watkins(7) suggested that a clear majority of support for the theme of a sub-group would be indicated by a mean of at least 60% of the possible total. The 60% mean is therefore included in Table 12 below.

Table 12 ASI Sub-Scale Means

	LEA N = 582	Liberal adult education N = 653	Distance Ed. education N = 183	OU Under-graduates N = 2254	60% Mean	UK(4) Conventional university students N = 2208
Deep approach	10.6	11.7	12.7	12.9	9.6	10.6
Inter-relating ideas	9.7	10.7	11.5	11.3	9.6	10.1
Uses of evidence	9.8	10.3	11.4	11.0	9.6	9.6
Instrinsic motivation	10.7	11.9	11.5	12.2	9.6	8.3
Surface approach	12.7	12.3	12.3	13.3	14.4	13.1
Syllabus boundness	6.6	6.5	7.2	7.5	7.2	8.3
Fear of failure	5.1	4.9	4.1	3.8	7.2	5.9
Extrinsic motivation	6.1	4.8	3.5	2.2	9.6	5.9
Strategic Approach	9.6	10.1	11.1	11.4	9.6	10.3
Disorganised study methods	7.5	7.4	6.8	5.6	9.6	9.5
Negative attitudes to study	6.1	5.3	5.1	4.3	9.6	9.7
Achievement motivation	8.8	7.5	8.6	8.6	9.6	9.7
Comprehension learning	9.2	9.7	8.4	8.7	9.6	8.6
Globe trotting	8.1	8.3	7.4	8.2	9.6	7.7
Operation Learning	9.9	10.1	11.2	11.2	9.6	10.1
Improvidence	8.3	8.1	8.1	7.4	9.6	7.6

(4) Taken from reference (4).

A Caution!

One feature of using a standard questionnaire with widely differing groups of students is that some questions may not necessarily be appropriate, or may be interpreted in different ways. We believe we have detected one notable misinterpretation by students using the Inventory. All groups of respondents scored highly on the sub-scale deep approach and might be expected, therefore, to score lower on the contrasting sub-scale surface approach and this is not the case here. We suggest that statements which concern memory, a known major issue for older students, may have a different connotation for older and younger students and this probably distorted the responses of older students to this sub-scale. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that this affects only one of 16 sub-scales and we conclude that the Inventory is valid for describing the learning characteristics of older students.

7.2 Discussion of the Mean Scores

Table 12 above shows considerable similarities between all groups of students, albeit with a few notable exceptions discussed below, and suggests that there are no important differences between the approach to studying of older students and that of younger students.

This was confirmed by using the technique of factor analysis, which was used to determine the number of factors underlying the sub-scales. Our data are shown in Appendix 9.

7.3 Motivation

Three different types of motivation appear in the sub-scales:

intrinsic - an interest in the learning of the subject for its own sake

extrinsic - skills/qualifications are the source of motivation

achievement - motivation driven by competition or the need to be successful

All four groups of older respondents showed a higher intrinsic motivation than the younger respondents, reflecting the strong themes identified in Chapter 5 of 'wishing to keep their mind active', 'personal development' and 'developing an interest in a particular area'.

Extrinsic motivation produced relatively high values for the younger students which is to be expected, and the interesting sequence LEA>Liberal Adult Education>Distance Education>OU students among the older students. The higher values for LEA and liberal adult education students reflects, we suspect, the higher practical aspect of many of their courses. Older OU undergraduates, perhaps surprisingly, show an unexpectedly low score for extrinsic motivation.

One question we posed at the beginning of our enquiry concerned whether there were differences between older students in different kinds of institution in their approach to studying. Inspection of Table 12 suggests the data for the two groups of distance education students is particularly similar. This suggests to us that the mode of studying may affect the approach to learning and there is some evidence from other researchers(6) that this is the case.

Summary

The findings of the Inventory suggest that all the respondents, as older students in the different institutions we surveyed, broadly speaking, on the basis of the data, appear to have satisfactory approaches to study. To the specific question at the beginning of this report, whether older students in other forms of adult education are significantly different from OU students the answer appears to be no. A possible explanation of the relatively small differences may be found in the nature of the requirements of the different institutions. We have to say that the use of the Inventory raises more questions than it answers. We are using it in our research with students in European institutions and we shall re-examine the issues in that wider context.

References

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3. Marton, F., Saljo, R., (1976) On qualitative differences in learning, 2 - Outcome as a function of the learner's concept of the task. Br. J. educ. Psychol., 46, 115-127.

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CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Our questionnaire evidence suggests that there were marked similarities between the older students in all the institutions we studied - most of them, for instance, had enjoyed their schooling, and they had nearly all undertaken further training after leaving school (see Chapter 3). And we found from the open-ended comments that many of them had taken courses in several different institutions during the previous few years. Often this year's LEA student was last year's OU student, and vice versa. This was most obviously the case with students in the relatively new institutions - the Open University and the Universities of the Third Age.

But while at one level we were looking at an homogeneous group, at another level we can see clear differences. There are educational differences, for instance, between older men and older women (see Chapter 3). Older men tend to undertake correspondence courses and courses leading to qualifications, and to do so in early retirement - in their 60s. Older women are less likely to undertake courses leading to qualifications, and are more likely to enrol for courses which involve attendance at classes, and to continue doing so into their 70s and even 80s. These differences may reflect their differing educational experiences from childhood onwards. Such gender differences make the Open University/distance institutions look very different from the liberal adult education/LEA institutions, with their high proportion of women.

The data on previous educational qualifications show another and a different pattern. In this respect, the distance institutions are at one extreme, with 63% of their respondents already in possession of certificates or degrees. At the other extreme are the LEA classes, 42% of their older students being without formal qualifications. But at the same time, the LEA classes also function as retirement activities for many well-qualified older people - 28% of their respondents have certificates or degrees, only slightly fewer than the 30% of such students in the Open University. More striking again is the evident function of the liberal adult education institutions in providing retirement opportunities for the well-qualified - 46% of their respondents had certificates or degrees. From this point of view the Open University appears as relatively less elitist than has sometimes been suggested.

The pattern shifts again when we look at the previous occupations of older students. None of the institutions has significant numbers of former blue collar workers, though the LEA classes have the largest proportion of junior white collar workers in clerical, office, sales and service occupations. The OU attracts the largest numbers of former non-academic professionals - administrators, managers, scientists, engineers and technicians; on the other hand, there are only about as many retired teachers in the OU as there are in LEA classes; it's the liberal institutions which are particularly attractive to retired teachers.

Some interesting differences emerge from older students' responses to the questionnaire about continuing their studies. Very few of our respondents were definitely intending to cease studying at the end of their current course (Chapter 4, Table 7). But distance students, most of them taking examinable courses, were not at all sure whether they intended to continue or not; 21% replied "don't know", and this reminded us of the 25% "don't knows" in our 1984 OU report. The LEA and liberal adult education respondents on the other hand were very clearly committed to continue with studies similar to their current courses, 69% and 66% respectively.

So within the community of people-interested-in-adult-education there are still distinct 'flavours' to the various older student groups in English adult education. Older people may move around from year to year, in one year taking an examinable course, in another a recreational class; but the institutions they make use of still have distinctive identities.

These different identities also appear in the data for courses undertaken by older students in the various institutions (Chapter 4). Respondents look to the 'liberal' institutions predominantly for arts subjects (54%), and to the LEA institutions particularly for practical craft subjects (28%). Few older students in any of the institutions undertake courses in mathematics or science.

Why then do older students so often go to the trouble of taking courses which, for retired or newly-retired people, have no promotion or vocational functions? Interest in the actual content of study still, at age 60 plus, plays an important part - it is the main reason for studying for LEA, liberal and distance respondents (Chapter 5, Figures 4 to 6).

Keeping the mind active, and continuing to develop as a person, are also very important reasons for study among all groups, including older Open University students. But in the Open University and the distance institutions it is the further target of getting a qualification or a degree, and in the process demonstrating that you have made up for opportunities missed in the past, that becomes the most striking of older students' motives (Chapter 5, Figures 4 and 7). Here is an example of the effects of changing supply: the creation of the Open University in 1970-71, and its provision of examinable degree level courses through distance teaching techniques, made it possible for significant numbers of people over 60 to achieve the educational objectives they already had. Another motive often ascribed to older students - wanting to meet congenial people and to make new friends - appears as rather less significant than we might have expected: it understandably figures among the motives of older respondents in LEA centres and liberal institutions, but even in those it ranks below keeping the mind active and developing subject interests. Nowhere, it would seem, within adult education should classes for older people be dismissed as mere tea parties.

This seriousness of purpose underlying even sociable adult education classes also emerged in our data on study methods. 'Getting your head down' would seem to be a traditional approach to learning amongst older students, whatever the institution.

Older students are also prepared to devote significant amounts of time to their studies (Appendix 8, Table 19). Not surprisingly, students in the OU and the distance institutions with their examinable courses tend to study on four or five days each week. But more than a third of 'liberal' respondents study on two or three days, and even in the LEA classes the largest single group also studies on two or three days, but some of these were doing more than one course. When we were analysing enrolments, in fact, we found many older students taking more than one course at the same time, and some, taking several courses, who had virtually turned themselves into full-time students.

A very similar pattern emerges from our data on capacity for sustained study (Chapter 6, Table 9). Some older OU and distance students with examinable courses were understandably having to study for two or three hours at a stretch. But amongst liberal and LEA respondents too, the largest groups were studying for one or two hours at a time. There was no sign either in the data or in the open-ended comments that older students are unable to make the commitments of time and energy necessary to cope with the courses they have chosen. Most of them also thought that they were on schedule with their studies (Chapter 6, Table 10). Some OU and distance students, on their more rigorous courses, might be a little behind schedule; and one of the few items in our data which might be seen as evidence of a problem was the 17% of distance respondents who admitted to being usually well behind.

Our over 60s were strikingly self-contained and conservative in their study methods. Faced with the problem of being behind schedule, their first thought is just to work harder. Even in the OU, with its comprehensive tuition and counselling service, 40% of students with difficulties just rolled up their sleeves - though 26% of them are prepared to be more selective in their studies (Chapter 6, Table 11). There was a wider choice of options in how the people who responded prepared for examinations: but here again, two very traditional processes - going through notes, and re-reading all the course material - were undertaken by students of all kinds (Appendix 8, Table 24). The quite remarkable similarity in approach to examinations by students in all the different adult institutions suggests that older students employ learning techniques they acquired in the earlier phases of their lives, rather than new techniques which may be more relevant to their current courses: and that this might be an area in which the performance of older students might be enhanced.

Discussion

There were about 2,500,000 adult students in formal education classes in the United Kingdom in 1983, between 4% and 5% of the total population (Social Trends, (1986 p.53)[1]. We guess, on the basis of the limited data we collected, that about 20% of these were over 60 (see data in Appendix 2). The numbers of all adult students increased by some 10% between 1970 and 1983 (Social Trends op.cit.), and we believe that, with an ageing population and generally rising living standards, the proportion of older students among them will increase still more. The over 60s form, therefore, a large and significant group of students, the nature of the educational provison for whom should be a matter of interest and concern. Sadly, until very recently, it has been a group which in our view has been largely ignored, has been regarded as neglible in the educational scene, and has been poorly provided for. One of the functions of this report has been to make available for discussion at least some initial data on who these people are, what kinds of courses they take, why they take them, and what their educational aspirations might be; and to do so by looking at examples from each of the main forms of educational provision.

One issue which emerged was the extent to which courses chosen by older people are determined by the selection of subjects offered by the institutions. Is adult education for older students supply-led rather than demand-led? The answer is not straightforward. We can say that in our first report we showed that even in the Open University, in which older students (like all others) have a free choice of courses across the five faculties, arts courses still predominate in their choices. It would appear to us that all the institutions are in varying degrees subject to student demand; even if they cannot easily change a programme within any one academic year, they are able to drop unsuccessful courses and to put on requested courses in new or specialist areas. But where we think that supply is an important factor is in the geographical and physical character of class provision. Older people are genuinely deterrred by prospects of travelling on dark winter evenings to badly-lit evening centres in shabby buildings.

Another of the questions with which we began was whether the very competent group of Open University students we described in our first report were in any way representative of older adult learners as a whole. We believe that they are. There are, it is true, differences in gender, age, qualifications and previous employment between the student bodies of the various institutions: but we believe that they are less important than the similarities. We have been looking at those older adults who choose to spend part of their later life in relatively formal educational activities. Our impression is that such older adults know what they want to do and why, and approach their studies in a confident and resourceful way. They choose carefully between the various educational programmes available to them, and shop around from year to year as their perception of their educational needs changes. By 'voting with their feet' they have a significant effect in determining the content and style of the courses , but they have no significant control, either as students or as ratepayers, over the quality of the physical resources, of the buildings and equipment through which the classes are provided, and we think this is a limiting factor in the development of older adult provision. There is some evidence that where classes are mounted at times and in places suitable for older people there is an increase in the numbers of older students. More older students, we think, would also undertake forms of home-based learning (as we saw, many prefer to study on their own), if they were more familiar with such systems: but the experience of a lifetime of class instruction seems difficult to modify. For these, though competent, are conservative learners; and we would be reluctant to argue for too radical a change in course provision, when, as our evidence suggests, their approach to learning works.

In offering this account of older students in adult education we acknowledge weaknesses in our data: much of it has been derived from those older students who responded to our questionnaire. But we have nevertheless sifted a mass of material and spoken to many people, and in the process have formed a distinct impression of the character of the body of older students. We have found no evidence for some widely expressed views about them. They are not a special, small minority. Our respondents emerged as energetic well-organised adults - very far from being pathetic, helpless, vague, absorbed in the past and in need of care - and consciously taking steps to avoid becoming like this. They are, it is true, conservative in some of their methods (though probably no more so than most younger students). But they use their experience of life positively to approach adult education in a competent and confident way. Their rather traditional learning style may well reflect what is offered by courses and tutors.

Reference

1. Social Trends (1986) HMSO.

APPENDIX 1

Detailed List of Institutions Studied

Open University

Distance Education

London University (External Students)
The National Extension College, Cambridge
Wolsey Hall, Oxford

Liberal Adult Education

London University, Department of Extra-Mural Studies
Workers Educational Association - Berks, Bucks and Oxon District
- Southern District

Universities of the Third Age - Abingdon, Abergavenny, Barnstaple, Blackpool, Brighton, Bristol, Eastbourne, Hall Green Birmingham, Harpenden, Hexham, Huddersfield, Guildford, London, Nottingham, Oxford. Scarborough, Sutton Coldfield, Wakefield,

Local Education Authorities

Dorset County Council
    Christchurch Adult Education Centre

Essex County Council
    North Essex Area: Colchester, Frinton, Clacton Adult Education Centres, Riverside Club, Braintree College of Further Education
    South-East Essex Area: Southend Adult Education Centre

Leicester City Education Authority
    Leicester College of Adult Education
    New Parks Community College
    Charles Keene College of Further Education
    Judgemeadow Community College
    Crown Hills Community College
    Leicester University Department of Adult Education

Lancashire County Council: Education Department
    Department. of Education
    Community Education Services in Ribble Valley and Accrington and Rossendale

APPENDIX 2

Institutions Studied - Background Information

The institutions we studied fell into the three groups described in Chapter 2, section 2.1. A full list of the institutions is given in Appendix 1. Course provision by institutions is given in Appendix 3.

1. In the first group we placed three of the institutions we studied - those using principally distance teaching methods, though other methods are also used. There are no entry requirements, though students may need qualifications stipulated as prerequisites by an examining board. The institutions were London University (External Students); the National Extension College; and Wolsey Hall, a commercial correspondence college.

   London University (External) leaves students free to determine for themselves their patterns of study, though an advisory service is available.

   The National Extension College provides its own distance learning courses with tutorial backup. There is a wide range of courses ranging from those on practical or recreational skills to those leading to GCE O-Level or above, and those leading to City and Guilds or similar qualifications.

   Wolsey Hall does not devise its own courses, but provides lesson notes and tuition based on examination syllabuses and text books. It caters mainly for people working for professional qualifications up to degree standard, seeking degrees germane to their occupations, or (noticeably among the older students), working on degree courses for their own intellectual interest.

   The constituencies of these institutions have no geographical limits: they are at least nation-wide. Both London University (External) and Wolsey Hall have numbers of overseas students, but we sought details only of U.K. students in both cases. We were not able to get accurate data on the total numbers of students at any one time, or of those in each faculty, though we believe that NEC had about 5,000 and Wolsey Hall about 10,000 students.

   In all these cases - as for all institutions except the Open University - identifying and reaching older students was a major difficulty. None segregates students by age, and we had to search manually through records, not all of which noted dates of birth. A substantial proportion of the Wolsey Hall records arise from the former Metropolitan College, now absorbed by Wolsey Hall; as these do not show age this creates an important gap in the data.

2. The institutions we put under the heading of liberal adult education courses comprised our second group. They were the London University Department of Extra-Mural Studies, two districts of the Workers' Educational Association and eighteen of the Universities of the Third Age. Extra-Mural Departments and the WEA are officially designated Responsible Bodies, and the U3As are purely voluntary organisations. There are no

qualifications for entry. Their constituencies have defined geographical limits,though students who live outside the area can be accepted.

The London Extra-Mural Department enrols about 20,000 students each year. The WEA in the Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire District and in the Southern District in 1985/6 enrolled 8161 and 9525 respectively. The U3As vary in size from small groups of about a dozen to organisations with over 1,000 members. There is now a national association, the Third Age Trust, to which 45 U3As were affiliated at the end of 1985, though many have not yet done so. It received a modest grant from the Government.

Sally Whitaker's 1984 report(1) on a survey of London Extra-Mural students showed that 28% of them were over 60. In the WEA Berks, Bucks and Oxon District just under 12% claimed concessionary fees as pensioners in 1985, but it is known that many pensioners pay the full fee. The U3As do not have a lower age limit, but the majority of students are over 60.

The courses offered vary greatly in length, from short courses lasting one or two days, through series of ten or more classes to those calling for several years' study. Students in London Extra-Mural Department are expected to do reading, written or other work for their tutors, and to attend lectures. WEA course programmes are planned by local branches in response to student demand. For some the traditional lecture followed by discussion still predominates, but there is now a wide variety of methods, with increasing student participation in study activities. The U3As make their own programmes, which consist mainly of study groups and lectures, though a few organise sporting and craft activities.

3. LEA Institutions

Institutions run by the Local Education Authorities in Dorset, Essex, Lancashire and Leicestershire constituted our third group. Dorset was chosen as part of our original plan and the other three were investigated at the request of UDACE.

In the following paragraphs we include figures we were given by the institutions in each county. Because of differences in organisation and in record keeping we were not able to get figures which can be directly compared, though a general basis for comparison can be seen.

Dorset is the smallest of the four counties and is characterised by a heavily populated residential/industrial area to the East, around Bournemouth and Poole, and a remote rural area to the West. In the 1981 census the population was 578,993, of whom 25% were of pensionable age. Total adult student enrolment in 1986 was 22,021 (4% of the population). The main provider of adult education is the county authority, through the County Adult Education Organiser and not through Further Education or Tertiary Colleges. Our detailed studies were undertaken in the East of the county at Christchurch Adult Education Centre, where the total adult student enrolment was 2,520, of whom 680 (27%) were pensioners.

Essex has some areas of dense population and some remote rural areas. The 1981 census population was 1,461,890, with 17% of pensionable age, though in a few areas such as Clacton and Frinton the percentage is around 50%. The county administration of Senior Evening Institutes, Youth and Community Service, support for responsible bodies and voluntary organisations, and a variety of residential centres, camps and so on has been united since 1974 in the Community Education Service. It forms part of the further education function of the County Education Committee and is organised in five areas, each under a Community Education Officer. Our enquiries were made in the Community Education areas of North Essex and South East Essex.

In the North Essex area as a whole 13,508 adult students were enrolled, of whom 2,069 (15%) were pensioners. In South East Essex the adult student enrolment was 14,942, including 2,146 (14%) pensioners. In North Essex our respondents came from Braintree Riverside Club, Colchester, Clacton and Frinton adult centres, and in South East Essex from Southend and Leigh adult education centre.

Lancashire had a 1981 census population of 1,362,801, of whom 20% were of pensionable age. The County Education Department is responsible for nine Colleges of Further Education, one Polytechnic, 51 Evening Institutes and Community Education Centres and two residential Adult Education Centres. Our enquiries were made first in the County Education Department. Total adult student enrolment in 1985 was estimated as 66,000, of whom some 17,900 (27%) had fee remissions as pensioners. Our details come mainly from the Community Education Service in two of the former cotton town districts of East Lancashire, the Ribble Valley and the Accrington and Rossendale areas and from Alston Hall short-term Residential College for Adult Education at Longbridge near Preston. Some of our respondents came from adult education centres in the Ribble Valley at Ribblesdale, Whalley and Bowland, where the total adult student enrolment was 703, of whom 148 (21%) paid reduced fees as pensioners; and from centres in the Accrington and Rossendale area at Great Harwood, Church and Oswaldthistle, Clayton-le-Moors, Rushton, Haslingden, and Bacup, with a total enrolment of 1,486, including 548 (37%) pensioners. However, many responses came from Alston Hall where, the Principal reported, 12,836 students had attended courses of all sorts during the year April 1984 to March 1985.

Leicestershire in the 1981 census had a population of 835,647, with 16% pensioners. The county is not sub-divided for administrative purposes, though there are six areas, each headed by an Area Further Education Officer dealing with advisory support. The City of Leicester is one of these areas; there is no sub-division within the city. Our enquiries concentrated on provision within the city, which has a population currently estimated at 282,900, with 18% of pensionable age. Provision for adult education is in Leicester Polytechnic, Further Education Colleges and Community Centres and also in Leicester University Department of Adult Education and WEA. Our respondents came from six LEA centres: Leicester College of Adult Education, Charles Keene College of Further Education, New Parks, Crown Hills, Mundella and Judgemeadow Community Colleges and also from

Leicester University Department of Adult Education. Total adult student enrolment in 1986 in the city was 15,111, but no figures were available for the total claims for fee concessions as pensioners. The University Department of Adult Education enrolment was 10,797, but this covers South Leicestershire and all of Northamptonshire and it was not possible to get figures for the city of Leicester.

In each area we enquired whether there was any specific policy on older students. The institutions in our other two groups do not distinguish older students from the rest of the student body, except that in some cases fee reductions are offered to pensioners. In the LEA areas concessionary fees, normally 50%, are offered to pensioners, except in Leicestershire where fees for pensioners are reduced by the individual institutions by 50% or 75%, and by 25% by the University Department of Adult Education.

Dorset reported on discussions about educational opportunities for older people (at the Dorset Joint Committee for Adult Education and the Dorset Development Council for Adult Education), but no decisions on a positive policy were made.

In North Essex we noted that there are now many daytime courses, including courses in residential institutions, which have a special appeal for older students. In South East Essex it was reported that the percentage of elderly students attending any particular centre was in direct proportion to the availability of daytime classes.

Lancashire, however, in 1986, published a policy document on the theme: "Not a special group but a group with special needs". This emphasised that, with the exception of elderly students in residential care, there should be no special provision for the elderly; though in particular areas it also encouraged a positive approach to special problems.

In the City of Leicester too some courses are arranged specifically for the elderly.

Reference

1. Whitaker, S., (1984) Extra-mural students: a survey. Adult Education Vol. 57 No. 3. December 1984.

Table 13 Adult Student Enrolment in LEA Areas 1985/6

County	1981 census Population normally resident	% pensionable age	Adult Student Enrolment	Students claiming concessionary fees as pensioners	% of adult student enrolment
Dorset	578,993	25	22,021	4,768	22
Essex	1,461,890	17	58,802	7,519	12
Lancashire	1,362,801	20	66,000	17,900	27
Leicestershire	835,647	16	39,400		
City of Leicester	276,245	18	15,111		

Adult Student Enrolment by Institution 1985/6

LEA	Institutions	Total Enrolment	Fees paid as Pensioners	%
Dorset	Christchurch AEC	2,520	680	27
Essex	Colchester AEC	4,903	647	13
	Clacton AEC	2,833	580	20
	Frinton AEC	624	356	57
	Southend AEC	7,538	1,575	20
	Braintree Riverside Club - Entry limited to 200 students over 60			
Lancashire	Accrington and) Rossendale AECs)	1486	548	37
	Ribble Valley AECs	703	148	21
City of Leicester	Leicester College of AEC	9,260		
	Charles Keene College of FE	808		
	New Parks Community College	1,634		
	Crown Hill Community College	2,281		
	Mundella Community College	351		
	Judgemeadow Community College	No information		

APPENDIX 3

Course Provision

London University (External Students)

Courses are offered in 9 faculties - Theology, Arts, Law, Music, Medicine, Science, Engineering, Economics, Education. There are also diploma courses in Clinical Pathology, Contemporary French Studies and Public Administration.

Wolsey Hall

Correspondence tuition is provided in Languages, Arts, Social Science, Mathematics, and Computing Science; for professional qualifications in Law, Banking, Accountancy, Business Studies, Computing, Finance, Hotel and Catering Management and in a variety of technical skills required by the Business and Technical Educational Council.

National Extension College

Courses offered in 1985 (Total 84)

		%
1.	Languages	12
2.	Arts	27
3.	Social Science	17
4.	Mathematics	17
5.	Science/Technology	21
6.	Physical	0
7.	Practical crafts	1
8.	Technical non-manual	5
9.	Other	4

		London Extra-Mural (Total 664 courses)*	**WEA (B, B & O)** (381 courses)	**U3A** (Programmes of 12 U3As)** Number of U3As including subject
	Courses offered in 1985	%	%	Number
1.	Languages	0	1	7
2.	Arts	60	68	12
3.	Social Science	26	7	2
4.	Mathematics	1	1	4
5.	Science/Technology	12	15	4
6.	Physical	0	0	4
7.	Practical crafts	0	0	5
8.	Technical non-manual	2	6	3
9.	Other	0	2	8

* weekend and short courses were not included

** other programmes could not be analysed by subject.

APPENDIX 3 (continued)

LEA Local Education Authorities

	Dorset		North Essex		SE Essex	Leicester			Lancashire
	Christchurch	Colchester	Frinton	Clacton	Southend	Coll of AE	New Parks	Chas Keene	Ribble Valley
Subject	Number of Courses								
	224	460	113	138	279	250	137	70	73
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1.Languages	11	12	2	5	13	27	5	6	0
2.Arts	9	11	4	4	6	12	2	1	3
3.Soc Science	3	2	1	5	1	1	1	0	0
4.Maths	3	8	3	9	7	-	1	1	0
5.Science/ Technology	3	-	-	2	0	1	1	1	0
6.Physical	18	27	45	19	19	18	30	32	30
7.Practical Crafts	31	29	29	49	36	33	56	37	48
8.Technical non manual	13	.2	-	3	1	0	4	7	1
9.Other	8	8	17	9	18	9	1	14	18

APPENDIX 4

Table 14 Age, Sex and Marital Status of Students by Institution

		WHL %	NEC %	LEX %	U3A %	LEM %	WEA %	CHR %	LEIC %	LANC %	NEX %	SAC %
AGE	60-64	30	49	47	30	34	34	45	31	43	22	33
	65-69	40	28	37	33	32	32	31	40	31	35	37
	70-74	21	18	10	23	22	22	14	21	16	35	20
	75-89	9	5	7	14	13	12	11	10	11	8	9
SEX	MALE	62	38	87	28	30	29	31	34	21	37	33
	FEMALE	38	62	13	72	71	71	69	66	79	62	67
MARITAL STATUS	SINGLE	28	22	13	16	21	15	9	17	16	7	13
	MARRIED	62	61	69	50	47	57	76	61	51	60	57
	OTHER	11	18	18	34	31	28	14	22	32	30	30
	Base = respondents	47	74	62	451	88	114	94	247	84	103	54
		Wolsey Hall	National Extension College	London Univ External Students	Universities of the Third Age	London Univ Extra-Mural Dept	Workers Educational Association	Dorset	Leicester	Lancashire	North Essex	South East Essex

APPENDIX 5

Table 15 Highest Educational Level - by Institution

HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL	WHL %	NEC %	LEX %	U3A %	LEM %	WEA %	CHR %	LEIC %	LANC %	NEX %	SAC %
1. No formal qualification	6	22	2	22	18	16	43	39	43	53	33
2. RSA/CSE	3	1	0	3	3	1	2	2	4	6	13
3. CSE1/GCEO	4	10	2	12	11	18	19	14	10	8	19
4. GCE A	19	7	16	13	18	11	10	5	7	4	9
5. ONC/OND	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0
6. HNC/HND	9	3	3	3	2	4	0	2	4	4	0
7. Teaching Certificate	15	5	13	12	13	14	11	14	10	6	15
8. University Diploma	4	10	7	7	6	5	6	7	4	4	6
9. University degree	23	28	39	20	23	21	3	9	10	9	6
10. Postgraduate	15	12	18	7	3	8	3	4	2	1	0
No reply	2	1	2	1	2	0	3	4	2	6	0
Base = respondents	47	74	62	451	88	114	94	247	84	103	54
	Wolsey Hall	National Extension College	London Univ External Students	Universities of the Third Age	London Univ Extra-Mural Dept	Workers Educational Association	Dorset	Leicester	Lancashire	North Essex	South East Essex

APPENDIX 6

Table 16 Main Occupation - by Institution

MAIN OCCUPATION	WHL %	NEC %	LEX %	U3A %	LEM %	WEA %	CHR %	LEIC %	LANC %	NEX %	SAC %
1. FT Housewife	8	10	8	2	11	0	19	9	6	9	9
2.Housewife + PT work	1	5	4	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
3. Armed Forces	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Admin & Managers	10	10	8	9	11	13	5	9	4	7	11
5. Teachers	21	16	20	38	18	29	11	19	12	10	15
6. Medical	7	6	5	4	14	5	4	6	5	5	4
7. Social Welfare	4	0	4	0	4	0	2	3	2	0	0
8. Other professions & arts	12	8	16	21	8	31	4	5	6	9	7
9. Scientists & Engineers	2	8	5	4	1	2	3	1	2	2	2
10. Technical personnel	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	2	2	2	2
11. Electrical, skilled trades	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	4	4
12. Farming, manufacturing	2	1	1	6	0	0	2	3	13	9	0
13. Communication/Transport	1	1	0	0	4	2	2	1	0	2	6
14. Clerical & Office	24	21	21	9	22	11	22	24	17	24	26
15. Sales & Services	4	7	5	0	4	7	12	10	20	17	11
16. Unemployed	2	3	1	9	1	0	5	4	8	2	0
No reply	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
Base = Respondents	47	74	62	451	88	114	94	247	84	103	54
	Wolsey Hall	National Extension College	London Univ External Students	Universities of the Third Age	London Univ Extra-Mural Dept	Workers Educational Association	Dorset	Leicester	Lancashire	North Essex	South East Essex

APPENDIX 7

Table 17 Subjects Studied - by Institution

	WHL %	NEC %	LEX %	U3A %	LEM %	WEA %	CHR %	LEIC %	LANC %	NEX %	SAC %
1. Languages	34	26	10	19	9	4	26	12	13	17	20
2. Arts	40	20	15	47	66	69	7	24	7	18	26
3. Social Science	9	8	57	6	6	3	0	4	2	0	2
4. Mathematics	6	4	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2
5. Science and Technology	2	1	0	1	16	5	2	4	1	5	2
6. Physical	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	2	5	0	0
7. Practical/crafts	0	2	2	6	3	3	27	27	31	30	32
8. Technical non-manual	2	3	3	6	0	10	15	4	7	2	2
9. Other	0	1	1	5	0	2	5	11	12	18	9
10. None	2	3	3	4	0	2	3	8	5	4	0
No reply	5	10	5	6	0	1	3	5	16	8	6
Base = respondents	47	74	62	451	88	114	94	247	84	103	54
	Wolsey Hall	National Extension College	London Univ External Students	Universities of the Third Age	London Univ Extra-Mural Dept	Workers Educational Association	Dorset	Leicester	Lancashire	North Essex	South East Essex

APPENDIX 8

Patterns of study of older students

1. Orientation to study
   Table 18.

2. Time spent in study by older students
   Tables 19, 20, 21, 22 23.

3. Student preparation for examinations
   Table 24.

1. Orientation to study

Table 18 - Orientation to study

	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEA Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
Prefer to work on own	82	50	36	74
Prefer to talk to others	16	35	38	24
Both	1	1	1	-
No reply	1	14	25	2

2. Time Spent in Study by Older Students

Table 19 - Weekly Study Patterns

Distance Education (base = 183)

Days per week		Hours			
	%	0-2 %	2-4 %	4-6 %	7+ %
1	7	5	1	-	1
2-3	23	9	12	1	1
4-5	36	11	19	5	1
Every day	30	7	14	8	1
No reply	4				

Liberal Adult Education (base = 653)

Days per week		Hours			
	%	0-2 %	2-4 %	4-6 %	7+ %
1	17	12	4	-	*
2-3	36	20	12	3	*
4-5	18	9	7	1	*
Every day	12	6	5	1	*
No reply	17				

Table 19 continued

LEA Colleges (base = 582)

Days per week	%	Hours 0-2 %	2-4 %	4-6 %	7+ %
1	20	14	6	*	-
2-3	28	15	12	1	*
4-5	12	7	4	1	-
Every day	10	6	3	*	1
No reply	30				

Open University (base = 2254)

Days per week	%	Hours 0-2 %	2-4 %	4-6 %	7+ %
1	1	-	*	*	*
2-3	15	1	8	5	1
4-5	57	5	38	12	1
Every day	28	5	17	4	1
No reply	*				

* less than 0.5%

Table 20 - Time Spent in Tutorials

Hours spent per week	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEA Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
1	1	2	2	41
2	9	27	27	23
3	3	7	4	2
4	3	15	8	1
5	-	4	2	*
6	5	6	3	*
7	-	1	1	*
8+	2	3	2	1
No reply	77	36	51	34

Table 21 - Time Spent Reading Course Material

Hours spent per week	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEAs Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
1	8	11	8	1
2	14	17	9	2
3	5	7	3	4
4	8	7	3	7
5	7	4	1	7
6	7	3	1	11
7	2	1	1	6
8	3	-	1	10
9	2	-	*	3
10	4	1	*	16
11-15	7	1	*	21
16-20	4	-	*	6
21+	2	*	-	2
No reply	26	47	73	2

Table 22 - Time Spent Preparing Assessed Work

Hours spent per week	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEA Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
1	10	6	4	8
2	20	7	5	24
3	9	3	2	17
4	9	2	2	13
5	4	-	1	8
6	3	1	1	8
7-10	7	2	1	12
11+	1	1	-	7
No reply	37	77	83	3

Table 23 - Time Spent in Reading/Extra Study

Hours spent per week	Distance Education Base = 183	Liberal Adult Education Base = 653	LEAs Base = 582	OU Base = 2254
	%	%	%	%
1	8	9	8	24
2	15	17	10	22
3	7	5	3	8
4	3	6	3	6
5	4	2	2	3
6	3	3	1	3
7-10	8	4	2	3
11+	6	2	1	1
No reply	45	51	69	28

3. Student Preparation for Examinations

TABLE 24 Student Preparation For Examinations

	Distance Education Base = 115		Liberal Adult Education Base = 37		LEAs Base = 47		OU Base = 2254	
	all aspects %	most important %	all aspects %	most important %	all aspects %	most important %	all aspects %	most important %
Do little or no special preparation	6	3	-	3	4	2	3	1
Go through assignments and tutor comments	60	8	65	8	55	8	80	9
Work through specimen exam papers	63	10	62	11	51	6	73	16
Re-read all the course material	63	17	57	11	72	19	43	18
Go through notes thoroughly	68	22	65	24	72	21	64	22
Try to discuss residual problems with tutor	18	-	19	-	21	4	15	*
Try to memorise a few key facts/concepts	42	5	60	11	45	2	74	10
Try to work out likely topics with tutor/students	26	2	38	8	23	2	41	3
Increase study time	39	3	51	5	53	6	60	8
Other	8	1	3	-	8	-	11	3

* less than 0.5%

APPENDIX 9

Approaches to Study Inventory - Factor Analysis

Table 25 - Four Factor Solution Showing Loadings (>0.30) of ASI Sub-Scales

	OU Undergraduate Older Students				Distance Education				Liberal adult education				LEA			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Deep Approach	67				72				81				85		-41	
Inter-relating ideas	72				80				74				75			
Use of Evidence	65				72				60				75			
Intrinsic Motivation	58			32	54				70				72		-35	
Surface Approach		59	-49	-36		52	-53	51		50	-59	42		37	-68	31
Syllabus-boundness			-56	-34			-64				-65				-69	
Fear of Failure		50		-33		52		39		60		35		56		36
Extrinsic Motivation				-37				56		30		73	-41	48		67
Strategic Approach	33		-39		59		-47		56		-44		64		-50	
Disorganised Study Methods		58				44		34		70				66	-31	
Negative Attitudes to Studying		47		-41		48		64	35	43		60	-47	63		38
Achievement Motivation	34						-38	47				40				33
Comprehension Learning	54	34			44	33			59				66			
Globe-trotting		67				63				60				50		
Operation Learning			-71		38		-66		42		-71		54		-77	
Improvidence		52	-55	-31		66	-57			36	-62	31		42	-65	
% of Variance (Each Factor)	36.4	42.9	14.7	5.9	37.4	43.1	10.5	8.9	41.4	36.8	12.2	9.6	49.6	36.1	8.7	5.6
% of Total Variance		55.1				59.1				62				65.4		

The Inventory contains 16 sub-scales and the purpose of factor analysis is to see whether these sub-scales are measuring to varying degrees a smaller number of variables which may represent characteristics of a student's approach to learning.

Previous studies[1] and our own data all indicate a four factor solution which suggests that the ASI is measuring four aspects of a student's approach to study.

At this stage it may be appropriate to say that our results for all four of our groups show remarkable similarity to those of previous studies; and we conclude that the Approaches to Study Inventory is valid for describing the learning characteristics of older students in the United Kingdom who study by both face-to-face and distance education modes.

Reference

1. See references after Chapter 7.

APPENDIX 10

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies.
Workers' Educational Association, Berks, Bucks, & Oxon District.
Workers' Educational Association, Southern District.
National Extension College.
Wolsey Hall, Oxford.
Universities of the Third Age in Abergavenny, Abingdon, Barnstaple, Brighton, Bristol, Blackpool & Preston, Birmingham, Eastbourne, Guildford, Harpenden, Hexham, Huddersfield, Nottingham, Oxford, Scarborough, Sutton Coldfield, Wakefield and London.
Christchurch Adult Education Centre, Dorset
Braintree College of Further Education.
Colchester Adult Education Centre.
Clacton College of Further Education.
Frinton & Walton Adult Education Centre.
Southend Adult Education Centre.
Leigh Community Centre.
Lancashire College of Adult Education.
Blackburn College of Arts and Technology.
Whalley Adult Education Centre.
Accrington & Rossendale College of Further Education.
Alston Hall Adult Education Institute.
Leicester College of Adult Education.
Charles Keene College of Further Education.
New Parks Community Centre.
Crown Hills Community College.
Mundella Community College.
Judgemeadow Community College.
County Council Education Department, Essex.
North Essex Area Office for Community Education.
South East Area Office for Community Education.
Further and Community Education Department, Leicestershire.
Youth and Community Department, Lancashire County Council.

APPENDIX 11

1. Questionnaire : Students background and study methods.
2. Questionnaire : Students background and study methods - Open University.

STUDENTS' BACKGROUND AND STUDY METHODS

WHL 01 *(1-5)*

Please put a ring around your answer, like this ③, or, where appropriate, write your answers in the space provided.

SECTION 1 : We are pleased that you are interested in filling in this questionnaire and hope that you will first give us a few personal details which we need.

1. How old will you be by the end of 1985? *(Please write in)* → Years ☐ *(6,7)*

2. a) What is your sex?

Male	1	*(8)*
Female	2	

b) Your marital status?

Single	1	*(9)*
Married	2	
Other	3	

3. Which of the following is nearest to your highest level of educational qualification? *(Ring one only)*

No formal qualification	1	*(10,11)*
RSA, CSE (except Grade 1)	2	
CSE (Grade 1), GCE 'O' levels	3	
GCE 'A' levels..............................	4	
ONC/OND	5	
HNC/HND	6	
Teaching certificate	7	
University diploma	8	
University degree	9	
Postgraduate degree	10	

4. a) What is your present occupation / what was your occupation on retirement? (Please give as exact a job description as possible.)

For office use only

____

____ ☐ *(12,13)*

b) Please also describe the main occupations which you had during the rest of your working life.

For office use only

____ ☐ *(14,15)*

____ ☐ *(16,17)*

5. Looking back, did you enjoy your own schooling? *(Ring one only)*

Very much	1	*(18)*
On the whole	2	
Not very much	3	
Not at all	4	

6. Have you been involved in any training or futher education after leaving school:
   a) immediately or within five years?
   b) some time later (five years or more)?
   (Ring all that apply for both)

	Immediately/ soon after		Later (5 years+)	
Yes, at college	1	*(19)*	1	*(28)*
Yes, at university	1	*(20)*	1	*(29)*
Yes, leading to professional qualification	1	*(21)*	1	*(30)*
Yes, apprenticeship	1	*(22)*	1	*(31)*
Yes, leading to educational qualification	1	*(23)*	1	*(32)*
Yes, courses mainly for interest but not leading to qualifications	1	*(24)*	1	*(33)*
Yes, other work-related/vocational training	1	*(25)*	1	*(34)*
No, nothing formal	1	*(26)*	1	*(35)*
Other *(Write in)*	1	*(27)*	1	*(36)*

7. Was your education interrupted by any of the following? *(Ring all that apply)*

Moving home	1	*(37)*
War/national service	1	*(38)*
Lack of money	1	*(39)*
Illness (self)	1	*(40)*
Illness (family)	1	*(41)*
Marriage	1	*(42)*
Having a family	1	*(43)*
Other *(Write in)*	1	*(44)*

8. What subject(s) are you currently studying? *(Please write in)*

☐☐ *(45,46)*

For office use only

9. **Does your study lead to any formal qualification?**

Yes	1	*(47)*
No	2	

If 'Yes', what is it? *(Please write in)*

____ ☐☐ *(48,49)*

For office use only

10. a) What were your reasons for wanting to study? and
b) Which was your main reason?

	Your reasons *(Ring all that apply)*		Main reason *(Ring one)*	
To continue developing as a person - stretching myself	1	*(50)*	1	*(63)*
Just wanted to keep my mind active	1	*(51)*	2	
To get a qualification	1	*(52)*	3	
To develop my interest in a particular area	1	*(53)*	4	
To prove something to myself	1	*(54)*	5	
Wanted to be better educated, better informed generally	1	*(55)*	6	
To find a new identity after retirement	1	*(56)*	7	
To make up for lack of opportunity or missed opportunities in the past	1	*(57)*	8	
To fill in extra leisure time	1	*(58)*	9	
To make new friends/meet congenial people	1	*(59)*	A	
Study would be a new interest	1	*(60)*	B	
To have more in common with family/friends who have studied more than me	1	*(61)*	C	
Other *(Write in)*	1	*(62)*	D	

____

____

11. Does undertaking study create any domestic difficulties?

No real difficulties	1	*(64)*
Yes, a few difficulties	2	
Yes, many difficulties	3	

If 'Yes', and you would like to tell us what sort of difficulties these were, please use this space.

____

____

____

12. **When this course ends, do you intend to carry on studying?**

Yes, more courses of a similar type	1	*(65)*
Yes, but at an academically more demanding level	2	
Yes, but something totally different	3	
Yes, but informally (reading etc)	4	
Don't know	5	
Definitely not	6	

If 'Definitely not', what will you do instead of studying?

Pursue new interests	1	*(66)*
Pick up old interests	2	
Nothing in particular/have a rest	3	

SECTION 2 **: In this section, we would like to ask you about the ways in which you organise your study. We have designed this questionnaire to cope with a very wide variety of types of study so you may find that some of the options given are irrelevant to your particular type of study.**

CARD 2 *(1-4)* *(5)*

13. In a typical week, about how many hours do you spend on the following components of study? (We realise that each week will not be the same but hope that you will be able to estimate an average amount per week.)

	Hours		
a) Reading course material	☐	*(Please write in to the nearest hour)*	*(6,7)*
b) Preparing assessed work	☐		*(8,9)*
c) Preparing non-assessed work	☐		*(10,11)*
d) In classes/tutorials	☐		*(12,13)*
e) Extra reading/private study	☐		*(14,15)*
f) Other *(please specify)*	☐		*(16,17)*

14. People have different patterns of study. Please choose the most appropriate pattern from those given below and indicate the amount of time you spend each day by ringing the number in the relevant column.

	Hours per day				
	0-2 hrs	2-4 hrs	4-6 hrs	7+ hrs	
I study only one day a week	1	2	3	4	*(18)*
I study 2 or 3 days a week	1	2	3	4	*(19)*
I study 4 or 5 days a week	1	2	3	4	*(20)*
I study every day	1	2	3	4	*(21)*

15. For how long are you able to do concentrated study without taking a break? *(Ring one only)*

Less than ½ hour	1	*(22)*
½ - 1 hour	2	
1 - 2 hours	3	
2 - 3 hours	4	
More than 3 hours	5	

16. a) In general, do you find that you are able to keep up with the course material and/or the written work? *(Ring one only)*

Yes, I am usually on schedule	1	*(23)*
No, I am usually a little behind	2	
No, I am usually well behind	3	
Yes, I am usually a little ahead	4	
Yes, I am usually well ahead	5	

b) If you are usually behind schedule, what do you do?

____

____ ☐☐ *(24,25)*

____

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17. Which of the following two options most closely represents your approach to studying?

In general, I prefer to work on my own	1	*(26)*
I like to take every opportunity to talk to other students about my studies, in tutorials or informally	2	

18. a) Do you use any of the following aids to study?

b) Which of them is the most important to you?

	All used *(Ring all that apply)*		Most important *(Ring one only)*	
Notes in margins	1	*(27)*	1	*(38)*
Own separate written notes	1	*(28)*	2	
Top markers/high-lighters/underlining..	1	*(29)*	3	
Index cards	1	*(30)*	4	
Cassette recorder for notes	1	*(31)*	5	
Audio/video cassettes	1	*(32)*	6	
Home computer	1	*(33)*	7	
Library - local or national	1	*(34)*	8	
Photocopier	1	*(35)*	9	
Other *(please specify)*	1	*(36)*	A	
None of these	1	*(37)*	B	

19. a) Does the course you are following have a written examination?

Yes	1	*(39)*
No	2	

b) If 'Yes', how do you prepare for examinations?

	All *(Ring all that apply)*		Most important *(Ring one only)*	
I do little or no special preparation	1	*(40)*	1	*(50)*
I go through essay/assignments and tutor comments.	1	*(41)*	2	
I work through old exam papers	1	*(42)*	3	
I re-read all the course material	1	*(43)*	4	
I go through my notes thoroughly	1	*(44)*	5	
I try to discuss residual problems with my tutor..	1	*(45)*	6	
I try to memorise a few key facts/concepts	1	*(46)*	7	
I try to work out which topics are likely to come up in the exam with my tutor/and or. fellow students	1	*(47)*	8	
I increase my study time	1	*(48)*	9	
Other *(please specify - e.g. attending revision tutorials if these are provided)* ..	1	*(49)*	A	

____

____

SECTION 3 - In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements noted below.

Please circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view.

4 (✓✓) means Definitely agree

3 (✓) means Agree with reservations

1 (x) means Disagree with reservations

0 (xx) means Definitely disagree

2 (?) is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer.

If you accidentally circle two numbers to a question or leave a question out, we will have difficulty using any of your data, so please take care and check your answers.

CARD 3 (1-4)
(5)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
I find it difficult to organise my study time effectively	4	3	1	0	2	(6)
I try to relate ideas in one topic to those in others whenever possible	4	3	1	0	2	(7)
Although I have a fairly good general idea of many things, my knowledge of the details is rather weak	4	3	1	0	2	(8)
I enjoy competition : I find it stimulating	4	3	1	0	2	(9)
I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read	4	3	1	0	2	(10)
Ideas in the course (books) often set me off on long chains of thought of my own, only tenuously related to what I was reading	4	3	1	0	2	(11)
I chose my present course mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards	4	3	1	0	2	(12)
Continuing my education was something which happened to me, rather than something I really wanted for myself	4	3	1	0	2	(13)
I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments	4	3	1	0	2	(14)
I often find myself questioning things that I read in books or see or hear on Educational TV or Radio	4	3	1	0	2	(15)
I generally prefer to tackle each part of a topic or problem in order, working out one at a time	4	3	1	0	2	(16)
The continual pressure of study - deadlines and competition - often makes me tense and depressed	4	3	1	0	2	(17)
I find it difficult to "switch tracks" when working on a problem : I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go	4	3	1	0	2	(18)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of the course (term)	4	3	1	0	2	(19)
It's important to me to do really well in the course	4	3	1	0	2	(20)
The materials seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated	4	3	1	0	2	(21)
Distractions make it difficult for me to concentrate on my studies	4	3	1	0	2	(22)
When I'm doing written work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular Tutor seems to want	4	3	1	0	2	(23)
I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read	4	3	1	0	2	(24)
The course materials and the Tutor sometimes give indications of what is likely to come up in exams, so I look out for what may be hints	4	3	1	0	2	(25)
In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution	4	3	1	0	2	(26)
My main reason for studying is that it will help me to get a better job	4	3	1	0	2	(27)
Often I find myself wondering whether the study I am doing is really worthwhile	4	3	1	0	2	(28)
I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult	4	3	1	0	2	(29)
I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised	4	3	1	0	2	(30)
A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic	4	3	1	0	2	(31)
I prefer to follow well tried approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous	4	3	1	0	2	(32)
I'm rather slow at getting down to study	4	3	1	0	2	(33)
In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply	4	3	1	0	2	(34)
When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later	4	3	1	0	2	(35)
I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far	4	3	1	0	2	(36)
I chose this course more from the way it fits in with career plans than from my own interests	4	3	1	0	2	(37)
I am usually cautious in drawing conclusions unless they are well supported by evidence	4	3	1	0	2	(38)
When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer	4	3	1	0	2	(39)
I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking	4	3	1	0	2	(40)
Often I find I have to read things without having a chance to really understand them	4	3	1	0	2	(41)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do something to change them	4	3	1	0	2	(42)
I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting evidence or findings	4	3	1	0	2	(43)
My main reason for studying is so that I can learn more about the subjects which really interest me	4	3	1	0	2	(44)
In trying to understand new topics, I often explain them to myself in ways that other people don't seem to follow	4	3	1	0	2	(45)
I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn	4	3	1	0	2	(46)
It is important to me to do things better than my friends and relations if I possibly can	4	3	1	0	2	(47)
I find it better to start straight away with the details of a new topic and build up an overall picture in that way	4	3	1	0	2	(48)
Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own	4	3	1	0	2	(49)
One way or another I manage to get hold of the books I need for studying	4	3	1	0	2	(50)
I often get criticised for introducing irrelevant material into my essays or tutorials	4	3	1	0	2	(51)
I find that studying my course can often be really exciting and gripping	4	3	1	0	2	(52)
The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions	4	3	1	0	2	(53)
I certainly want to pass the next set of exams, but it doesn't really matter if I only just scrape through	4	3	1	0	2	(54)
I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper	4	3	1	0	2	(55)
Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to fit them together into an overall picture	4	3	1	0	2	(56)
I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing written work	4	3	1	0	2	(57)
Having to speak in class is quite an ordeal for me	4	3	1	0	2	(58)
Puzzles or problems fascinate me, particularly where you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion	4	3	1	0	2	(59)
I spend a good deal of my spare time in finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in classes	4	3	1	0	2	(60)
I find it helpful to 'map out' a new topic for myself by seeing how the ideas fit together	4	3	1	0	2	(61)
I seem to be a bit too ready to jump to conclusions without waiting for all the evidence	4	3	1	0	2	(62)
I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters	4	3	1	0	2	(63)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
I think it is important to look at problems rationally and logically without making intuitive jumps	4	3	1	0	2	(64)
I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the materials presented them	4	3	1	0	2	(65)
When I'm reading an article or research report, I generally examine the evidence carefully to decide whether the conclusion is justified	4	3	1	0	2	(66)
The Tutor seems to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas	4	3	1	0	2	(67)
When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to join this centre/college	4	3	1	0	2	(68)
I find my study so interesting, I should like to continue with them after I finish this course	4	3	1	0	2	(69)

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. We would also welcome any personal comments you may wish to make about the ways you've studied and your experience of study over the years. If you would like to make additional comments, please use the rest of this space, or attach an extra sheet of paper.

OLDER STUDENTS STUDY METHODS

Please put a ring around your answer like this③, or, where appropriate, write your answer in the space provided. But first,

ØU U 001 *(1-6)*

PLEASE WRITE YOUR STUDENT NUMBER HERE ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ *(7-14)*

SECTION 1 : **In this section we would like to ask you about the ways in which you organise your study.**

1. In a typical week, about how many hours do you spend on the following components of study? (We realise that each week will not be the same but hope that you will be able to estimate an average amount per week.)

	Hours		
a) Reading course material		*(Please write in to the nearest hour)*	*(15,16)*
b) Preparing assessed work			*(17,18)*
c) Preparing non-assessed work			*(19,20)*
d) In classes/tutorials			*(21,22)*
e) Extra reading/private study			*(23,24)*
f) Other *(please specify)*			*(25,26)*

2. People have different patterns of study. Please choose the most appropriate pattern from those given below and indicate the amount of time you spend each day by ringing the number in the relevant column.

	Hours per day				
	0-2 hrs	2-4 hrs	4-6 hrs	7+ hrs	
I study only one day a week	1	2	3	4	*(27)*
I study 2 or 3 days a week	1	2	3	4	*(28)*
I study 4 or 5 days a week	1	2	3	4	*(29)*
I study every day	1	2	3	4	*(30)*

3. For how long are you able to do concentrated study without taking a break? *(Ring one only)*

Less than ½ hour	1	*(31)*
½ - 1 hour	2	
1 - 2 hours	3	
2 - 3 hours	4	
More than 3 hours	5	

4. a) In general, do you find that you are able to keep up with the course material and the written work? *(Ring one only)*

Yes, I am usually on schedule	1	*(32)*
No, I am usually a little behind	2	
No, I am usually well behind	3	
Yes, I am usually a little ahead	4	
Yes, I am usually well ahead	5	

b) If you are usually behind schedule, what do you do?

____

____ ☐☐ *(33,34)*

____

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5. Which of the following two options most closely represents your approach to studying?

In general, I prefer to work on my own	1	*(35)*
I like to take every opportunity to talk to other students about my studies, in tutorials or informally	2	

6. a) Do you use any of the following aids to study?

b) Which of them is the most important to you?

	All used *(Ring all that apply)*		Most important *(Ring one only)*	
Notes in margins	1	*(36)*	1	*(46)*
Own separate written notes	1	*(37)*	2	
Top markers/high-lighters/underlining	1	*(38)*	3	
Index cards	1	*(39)*	4	
Cassette recorder for notes	1	*(40)*	5	
Audio/video cassettes	1	*(41)*	6	
Home computer	1	*(42)*	7	
Library - local or national	1	*(43)*	8	
Photocopier	1	*(44)*	9	
Other *(please specify)*	1	*(45)*	A	

7. How do you prepare for examinations?

	All *(Ring all that apply)*		**Most important** *(Ring one only)*	
I do little or no special preparation	1	*(47)*	1	*(57)*
I go through assignments and tutor comments	1	*(48)*	2	
I work through specimen exam papers	1	*(49)*	3	
I re-read all the course material	1	*(50)*	4	
I go through my notes thoroughly	1	*(51)*	5	
I try to discuss residual problems with my tutor..	1	*(52)*	6	
I try to memorise a few key facts/concepts	1	*(53)*	7	
I try to work out which topics are likely to come up in the exam with my tutor/and or fellow students	1	*(54)*	8	
I increase my study time	1	*(55)*	9	
Other *(please specify - e.g. attending revision tutorials if these are provided)* ..	1	*(56)*	A	

____

____

SECTION 2 - In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements noted below.

Please circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view.

4 (✓✓) means Definitely agree

3 (✓) means Agree with reservations

1 (×) means Disagree with reservations

0 (××) means Definitely disagree

2 (?) is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer.

If you accidentally circle two numbers to a question or leave a question out, we will have difficulty using any of your data, so please take care and check your answers.

(1-5)

CARD 2 *(6)*

(7-14)

	✓✓	✓	×	××	?	
I find it difficult to organise my study time effectively	4	3	1	0	2	*(15)*
I try to relate ideas in one topic to those in others whenever possible	4	3	1	0	2	*(16)*
Although I have a fairly good general idea of many things, my knowledge of the details is rather weak	4	3	1	0	2	*(17)*
I enjoy competition : I find it stimulating	4	3	1	0	2	*(18)*
I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read	4	3	1	0	2	*(19)*
Ideas in the course (books) often set me off on long	4	3	1	0	2	*(20)*

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
I chose my present course mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards	4	3	1	0	2	*(21)*
Continuing my education was something which happened to me, rather than something I really wanted for myself	4	3	1	0	2	*(22)*
I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments	4	3	1	0	2	*(23)*
I often find myself questioning things that I read in books or see or hear on Educational TV or Radio	4	3	1	0	2	*(24)*
I generally prefer to tackle each part of a topic or problem in order, working out one at a time	4	3	1	0	2	*(25)*
The continual pressure of study - deadlines and competition - often makes me tense and depressed	4	3	1	0	2	*(26)*
I find it difficult to "switch tracks" when working on a problem : I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go	4	3	1	0	2	*(27)*
My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of the course (term)	4	3	1	0	2	*(28)*
It's important to me to do really well in the course	4	3	1	0	2	*(29)*
The materials seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated	4	3	1	0	2	*(30)*
Distractions make it difficult for me to concentrate on my studies	4	3	1	0	2	*(31)*
When I'm doing written work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular Tutor seems to want	4	3	1	0	2	*(32)*
I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read	4	3	1	0	2	*(33)*
The course materials and the Tutor sometimes give indications of what is likely to come up in exams, so I look out for what may be hints	4	3	1	0	2	*(34)*
In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution	4	3	1	0	2	*(35)*
My main reason for studying is that it will help me to get a better job	4	3	1	0	2	*(36)*
Often I find myself wondering whether the study I am doing is really worthwhile	4	3	1	0	2	*(37)*
I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult	4	3	1	0	2	*(38)*
I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised	4	3	1	0	2	*(39)*
A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic	4	3	1	0	2	*(40)*
I prefer to follow well tried approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous	4	3	1	0	2	*(41)*
I'm rather slow at getting down to study	4	3	1	0	2	*(42)*
In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply	4	3	1	0	2	*(43)*

	✓✓	✓	X	xx	?	
When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later	4	3	1	0	2	(44)
I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far	4	3	1	0	2	(45)
I chose this course more from the way it fits in with career plans than from my own interests	4	3	1	0	2	(46)
I am usually cautious in drawing conclusions unless they are well supported by evidence	4	3	1	0	2	(47)
When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer	4	3	1	0	2	(48)
I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking	4	3	1	0	2	(49)
Often I find I have to read things without having a chance to really understand them	4	3	1	0	2	(50)
If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do something to change them	4	3	1	0	2	(51)
I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting evidence or findings	4	3	1	0	2	(52)
My main reason for studying is so that I can learn more about the subjects which really interest me	4	3	1	0	2	(53)
In trying to understand new topics, I often explain them to myself in ways that other people don't seem to follow	4	3	1	0	2	(54)
I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn	4	3	1	0	2	(55)
It is important to me to do things better than my friends and relations if I possibly can	4	3	1	0	2	(56)
I find it better to start straight away with the details of a new topic and build up an overall picture in that way	4	3	1	0	2	(57)
Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own	4	3	1	0	2	(58)
One way or another I manage to get hold of the books I need for studying	4	3	1	0	2	(59)
I often get criticised for introducing irrelevant material into my essays or tutorials	4	3	1	0	2	(60)
I find that studying my course can often be really exciting and gripping	4	3	1	0	2	(61)
The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions	4	3	1	0	2	(62)
I certainly want to pass the next set of exams, but it doesn't really matter if I only just scrape through	4	3	1	0	2	(63)
I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper	4	3	1	0	2	(64)
Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to fit them together into an overall picture	4	3	1	0	2	(65)

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing written work	4	3	1	0	2	(66)
Having to speak in class is quite an ordeal for me	4	3	1	0	2	(67)
Puzzles or problems fascinate me, particularly where you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion	4	3	1	0	2	(68)
I spend a good deal of my spare time in finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in classes	4	3	1	0	2	(69)
I find it helpful to 'map out' a new topic for myself by seeing how the ideas fit together	4	3	1	0	2	(70)
I seem to be a bit too ready to jump to conclusions without waiting for all the evidence	4	3	1	0	2	(71)
I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters	4	3	1	0	2	(72)
I think it is important to look at problems rationally and logically without making intuitive jumps	4	3	1	0	2	(73)
I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the materials presented them	4	3	1	0	2	(74)
When I'm reading an article or research report, I generally examine the evidence carefully to decide whether the conclusion is justified	4	3	1	0	2	(75)
The Tutor seems to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas	4	3	1	0	2	(76)
When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to join the Open University	4	3	1	0	2	(77)
I find my study so interesting, I should like to continue with them after I finish this course	4	3	1	0	2	(78)

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. We would also welcome any personal comments you may wish to make about the ways you've studied and your experience of study over the years. If you would like to make additional comments, please use the rest of this space or attach an extra sheet of paper.